

THE  
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

JULY 1934.

NEW LIGHT ON BYRON'S LOVES.

IV. THE TRAGI-COMEDY OF LADY CAROLINE.

(Continued.)

BY GEORGE PASTON.

THERE were now—in the summer of 1814—rumours of Byron's marriage. It was generally believed that he had proposed to Lady Adelaide Forbes, and he was again carrying on a sentimental correspondence with Miss Milbanke. Caroline found, as she told Murray, a new source of misery which her imagination had conjured up.

'I think,' she writes, 'that I shall live to see the day when some beautiful and innocent Lady Byron shall drive to your door. I picture to myself the delight with which you will receive her—how every remark of hers will be admired by you, and how bright she will appear to you compared with one who is faded and fallen. I really believe that when that day comes I shall buy a pistol at Manton's and stand before the Giaour and his legal wife and shoot myself, saying as Billy Taylor's mistress<sup>1</sup> did, that as I must not live for him, I will die. I shall idolise that Lady Biron (*sic*), but do not you prefer her to me. You will because the law will uphold her, and there is something so beautiful in virtue and innocence that it sets like a crown of glory round a woman, and when she has cast it off she is contemptible, or at least only worthy of pity. If you knew how good I once was, how sorry you would be for me now. . . . Oh that Lady Biron! How I feel sure that you will prefer her ten thousand times to me—everyone will.'

*Lara* came out in August, published at first with Rogers's poem, *Jacqueline*.<sup>2</sup>

'I have been reading *Lara*,' wrote Caroline to Murray, 'and it is

<sup>1</sup> She alludes to the burlesque ballad of Billy Taylor. His sweetheart went to sea with him in boy's clothes, and when he was faithless shot him and his 'lady gay.' She did not shoot herself, but was promoted by the Captain, who 'werry' much applauded what she had done.'

<sup>2</sup> Byron was supposed to have over-written himself this year and it was thought best to publish his latest poem with Rogers's. But 'Larry and Jacky,' as Byron called them, were very soon divorced.

quite beautiful. The story is very interesting, but everybody is asking why it was bound up with *Jacqueline*—fire and water-gruel. If you did it to make *Jacqueline* sell, it was in bad taste. I am angry at it.'

She did not care for the print from Phillips' portrait of Byron.

'I marvel how a man who attends so minutely to every button and tassell should not study the hand more—and the ear: In all England I know but of two that have ears similar<sup>1</sup>—and that eye except in the Albanian<sup>2</sup>—expresses every feeling the young Corsair has not—such as ill-humour, obstinacy, industry, instead of fire, genius, craft, spirit and incessant variety. Where is that star of Brightness that loves to shroud himself only to be the more admired?'

She was going to remain in the country till her mother and brother sail for Italy when she will accompany them.<sup>3</sup>

'I wish to leave my trunks with you and my cockatoo, and two Blenheim puppies and three pages. If you do not write instantly counter-orders they will be at your door with a French lady and child lately escaped stark mad from Bordeaux.'

The *Hebrew Melodies* which appeared later in the year did not please the lady at all. As 'an old steady reader of Swift and Pope,' she finds that the defect of the present day is that

'our Poets take no pains—they are so satisfied with their fame that instead of being more anxious on that account and fearful of losing ground, they wish to try what fashion and folly will make us swallow. Gray had never written as he did had he written as fast as some. . . . It is a childish pride that our Poets now cherish to note the number of minutes and days in which they write a thing.<sup>4</sup> They hurt themselves by these hasty and ill-digested performances. "She walks in beauty like the night"<sup>5</sup> for example—if Mr. Twiss<sup>6</sup> had written it how we should have laughed! Now we can only weep to see how little just judgment there is on earth, for I make no doubt the name of Byron will give even these lines a grace. I who read his loftier lay with

<sup>1</sup> Hanson says that Byron had no lobes to his ears. This was a defect, not a beauty.

<sup>2</sup> The portrait in Albanian costume.

<sup>3</sup> She did not go with them.

<sup>4</sup> The *Bride of Abydos* was said to have been written in a week and the *Corsair* in ten days.

<sup>5</sup> The song was inspired by Mrs. Robert Wilmot, a dark beauty, who, when Byron first saw her, was wearing a black evening dress with silver spangles.

<sup>6</sup> Horace Twiss, wit, politician and journalist.

transport will not admire his flaws and nonsense. You will say it is only a song, yet a song should have sense.'

Byron's engagement to Miss Milbanke was announced about the middle of September. It had been feared by Caroline's family and friends that when she heard the news she would either commit suicide or shoot the bridegroom. But she really behaved very well, and her entourage must have breathed a sigh of relief. She did not buy a pistol at Manton's, as she had threatened, but wrote a nice little note to Byron, and sent him some heartsease from the Holy Well.

'Do you remember,' she asks, 'the first rose I gave you?<sup>1</sup> The first rose you brought me is still in my possession. You will find it in the trunk with all the other gifts that I could preserve. Now God bless you—may you be very happy. I love and honour you from my heart as a friend may love—no wrong I hope—as a sister feels—as your Augusta feels for you.'

To Murray she wrote more at length :

'Thank God,' she exclaims, 'my wandering mind is at length fixed. Thanks to the generosity of a man I hardly dare name—I mean my husband—I am not as wretched as I deserve. . . . I do entreat you to burn and to forget every memorial of what I now remember with deep contrition.

'I trust in God Byron will be happy. He has chosen one who is good and amiable and who deserves well of him. It is his last chance of keeping clear of what has too often led him astray. Pray excuse this moral letter. It is the last page of my novel—all the former ones you had better destroy.<sup>2</sup> . . .'

In lighter vein she enquires :

'Are you acquainted with my cousin Annabel? She is very learned and very good, and the top of her face is handsome—certainly handsomer than half the Biondellas and black and white ladies hitherto admired.<sup>3</sup> . . . I had a letter from him which might have been written by a Lord Chief Justice during the Assizes—I assure you the style froze me—though it was superlatively kind and condescending. How has he disposed of the other unfor-

<sup>1</sup> This rose was the early blossoming (or forced) rose which (together with a carnation) Byron sent Caroline after their first meeting. Her answer, written in the third person, is in this collection, but has been published.

<sup>2</sup> She was already at work on *Glenarvon*, published in 1816.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline also said that Byron would 'never be able to pull with a woman who went to church punctually, understood statistics and had a bad figure.'

tunates? I speak of them by dozens, you see. For God's sake, do not show this letter. . . . Do you want a dog, a page, a maid, a cook or a coachman? I can give a character to the first—and the others have been recommended to my protection because they have lost all other.'

The Byron-Milbanke marriage took place on January 2, 1815, but it was the end of March before the couple settled down in their house in Piccadilly Terrace. Caroline says that Lady Melbourne took her to call on the Byrons, though Annabella declared that Caroline never came to her house. In an answer to a letter from Murray, evidently upon the prospects of happiness for the bride and bridegroom Caroline wrote :

' Do you know my heart so well ? All that you expressed passed, and there it ends. As to the meeting, I am pleased with it—as to what follows it is not so wise. He never can be what he appears—he has not in him that which alone could realise so bright a vision. He has not a noble heart—therefore I consider all the rest of your letter nothing because it goes upon a false principle. . . . Remember when an enthusiast before you suddenly awoke. There is a black speck in our divinity, and like the most venomous of poisons, though concealed from the eye, it will show itself at the hour appointed. As to *herself* her character is spotless, her understanding sensible, accurate, intelligent, but when you talk of playfulness—I comprehend not your meaning. If Fulvia sporteth it must be like the dance of the elephant that would vainly attempt to rival the antelope—so sportive are all the Hobbies, Hollands, Clarks, Hertfords, and Prince Regents—there is mournful merriment, as Jacques says, in such playfulness as theirs.<sup>1</sup>

' Out, damned spot—do you remember Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth? If all the syrups of the East<sup>2</sup> and all the waters of the ocean can wash it away, then I will bow to my sometime idol and bear the chains of whatever bitterness may be mingled with them—in spight (*sic*) too of wife and Six-mile Bottom,<sup>3</sup> but as it is I wash my hands from ill deeds.'

It has been said that Byron's frequent visits to Melbourne House caused his wife some uneasiness. Perhaps Murray had some inkling of this, for he seems to have written to Caroline on the subject. She replies :

<sup>1</sup> Annabella nicknamed Caroline ' Fair-seeming Foolishness.'

<sup>2</sup> Caroline's memory was erratic, like her spelling. This is her version of ' all the perfumes of Arabia.'

<sup>3</sup> Augusta lived at Six-mile Bottom.

'My errors may have made me inestimable in your eyes, but I am not weak and mean and worldly-minded. . . . I would rather die than deceive her or play the hypocrite. As she is so closely connected with my family and has such a fair excellent character, I shall show her every respect, and the same to him, but I cannot court her, or go to her house or be her friend. This is too German<sup>1</sup> for me, and I have peculiar feelings on this head which stand in lieu of principles.'

'I am very miserable—they have ordered my brave brother and his regiment to Flanders. What a melancholy year this is.'<sup>2</sup>

Early in 1816 came the first news of the break-up of the Byron *ménage*. Caroline at once wrote off to Murray :

'For God's sake, tell me—have you breathed what I told you to anyone, and if not, have you heard the reports? Is it really true and do they know why? They say it is certain—everything is rumoured as cause of it—even the worst. I have been literally ill on account of it. Pray write.'

Later she wrote to the same :

'I have heard everything since I saw you, and I much wish to converse with you. . . . I have not had time to see or think of anything yet. All the wives of the Houses of Lords and Commons came to sup with me and stayed literally till four o'clock when their Lords entered. Lord Byron was at the House which I was glad of as it showed him calmed. Lady Byron has written twice.'

Caroline also wrote two or three letters to Byron, urging him to be reconciled to his wife, or at least to agree to an amicable separation.<sup>3</sup> She was very anxious that he should see Lady Mel bourne who 'had such a good head and knew Lady Noel so well.' She even offered to swear that she had sent false reports to Lady Byron which were at the root of the trouble. But then came the verses 'Fare thee well,' with which Byron sought to gain sympathy from the public at the expense of his wife. Caro implored him not to show them, or have them printed. To Murray she wrote more strongly :

'It should be a positive proof to you that I am no longer Lord Byron's friend and admirer—what I am now going to say to you.

<sup>1</sup> Again we find the use of 'German' for super-sentimental or romantic.

<sup>2</sup> Caroline went to Brussels after Waterloo, but there are no letters for that period.

<sup>3</sup> Published in the *Byron Letters and Journals*.

I think it is a shame to show those verses—to try to awaken feelings for him when his conduct, I find, has been too mean and atrocious even for such as I am to tolerate. For God's sake, see me. I think if you have a heart I can make it feel, and though to all others I will be silent, to you I will speak openly. . . . You will find me quite ill, but thank God, it is because I am not yet abandoned and hardened enough to see real virtue and generosity undone, and a coward and contemptible villain set up to be admired. You know how I have loved and what I have forgiven. No woman's feelings, no resentment, no jealousy occasion my present warmth. But I give you my solemn word that I would rather starve, or see my child die for want, than I would speak or think of Lord Biron but as a poor paltry hypocrite and a man without a heart. That serpent, his sister, too; but there is one comfort—God is just, and vengeance sooner or later must fall and crush them. My tongue is tied, but there are those who will speak . . . and do you think a few verses written in the true spirit of hypocrisy can excite any other feeling than contempt in those who know of what stuff real hearts are made.'

The next scandal—both public and private—was caused by the publication of Caroline's novel, *Glenarvon*, on which she had been working for two or three years. The book is a curious hotch-potch. There are echoes of Mrs. Radcliffe's romantic 'thrillers' with the usual murders, abductions, seductions, disguises and so forth, but the greater part of it consists of a long-drawn-out and highly-coloured account of the relations between the heroine Calantha (Caroline) and the villain Glenarvon (Byron). The author gives a vivid description of Byron's magnetic power over women and her own struggles to resist that malign influence. In dealing with the social side of her heroine's life she introduces some of her own friends and acquaintances, with a not too kindly touch. Lady Holland is portrayed as the Princess of Madagascar, who sits on a throne surrounded by tame reviewers wearing collars round their necks. Beside her stands a corpse-like poet—Samuel Rogers. Lady Oxford is represented by the passée pedantic beauty, Lady Mandeville, Lady Melbourne by the censorious Lady Monteith and Miss Milbanke by the virtuous Miss Monmouth.

Though the book was not worth reading on its merits it attracted a great deal of curiosity as a key-novel, and went through several editions. But the Melbournes, the Hollands, the Reviewers and the intimate friends of Byron, such as Hobhouse and Moore, all raged furiously together, and for a time Caroline was

almost as much ostracised as ever her lover had been. Strong efforts were made to persuade William Lamb to consent to a separation, but somehow Caroline was able to coax him out of any such decision. Hobhouse seems to have written to Lady Melbourne threatening to publish some letters from Caroline to Byron. On May 28, 1816, the distracted mother-in-law replied that she had been so plagued, vexed and tormented by this vile book that she had had no time to write.

' You must,' she continues, ' have a high idea of my courage, for the task you set me was not free from personal danger. However, rather than confess myself a coward, I delivered your message, of which you have probably received written *proofs*. Contrary to my expectation, it was received calmly, and great astonishment expressed, perhaps feigned, but she accounted for it by saying you had spoken to her in terms of great praise of the performance, stating you were sure Glenarvon would be delighted with her for having had the boldness to hold him up to the world at this time in all the glory of his fascinations and talents—and that he would not attend to the little trifling misdemeanours of which he was accused, they being to his taste and in his own stile. Afterwards she confessed she had since been told you had changed your opinion and found fault with many things in the book. As to myself, I was so disgusted with the spirit in which it was written that after reading the first 20 pages, I declared I would read no more, and tho' of course I have heard a great deal from others I am still very ignorant of its contents, and did not know that Miss Milbanke had appeared there till I received your note. She certainly deserves the punishment with which you threaten her, but are you sure of the effects that will be produced ? In the temper the world is in now about Lord B., I doubt their seeing any defence of him without prejudice, but you are more competent to judge than I am. I confess I wish it was possible to tear off the mask in which William sees her, for tho' she often lets him peep under it she pulls it down again so artfully that it only gives it more effect. Nobody I know will believe that, and yet it is strictly true. She spares neither flattery nor falsehood, and she has the greatest quickness and dexterity in taking advantage of every trifling incident that may give a turn in her favour. She has never shown him parts of the first vol., not a line of the second and third and promised him upon her word of honour that not a line of it should be published. This would be a sufficient reason with me for breaking with her immediately and irrevocably. But you gentlemen have soft hearts, and tears, ingenuity and a total disregard of truth, mixed up with a little flattery, have a strange effect upon them.

Seriously tho', it is nearly impossible for anyone to resist her arts, and it has required 7 or 8 years to make *me* perfect in them. . . .

Caro was not to be frightened by Hobhouse. Her answer to his message which Lady Melbourne delivered with so much trepidation, shows her full of fight.

' I have written to you three times and you have not answered, which I must consider as a great insult. I spoke to you frankly about the books, and you said you did not mind them and laughed about the Princess of Madagascar—appeared altogether good-humoured. Possibly you had not then finished them. I am now told that you intimate having my letters in your possession. I have a letter from Lord Byron which I will show, stating upon his honour that he has burnt every one of my letters, and entreating me to send him his, which I did not chuse to do, I being then indifferent whether he published mine or not. But as circumstances are much changed since, let him but publish the tenth part of a single line in any letter I ever wrote him—let him but write verses or books against me—or any of you—or Lady Holland—and if I die for it I vow to God I will on the instant publish not only all his, but the whole exact journal I have kept of my acquaintance with him, and his conduct during the last four years. I speak it not in menace, but to apprise you of it. As I am already nearly ruined by my own imprudence, I have little to risk by so doing. I only wait even for a Review, and if malice be in it or any personal application be given, Lady Holland and her minions shall have reason to rue the hour they got it done. Though my novel may have made me foes, I thank God I have friends and spirit left.

' Your most obedient servant,  
' CARO L.'

Hobhouse and the Hollands seem to have held their peace, at least in public. But an attempt was made by some of the family to prove that Caro was insane. Apparently the only basis for this accusation was what she called 'my page business.' She had thrown a hard ball at a tiresome page (who *would* put squibs on the fire) and cut his head open. When she saw the blood she rushed out screaming, 'Good God! I have killed the page!' Brougham was sent for to admonish her, but when he told her that if she was not careful, she might find herself at the Old Bailey, she snatched up a knife and Brougham fled for his life.<sup>1</sup> There is an allusion to the attempt to prove her mad in the draft of a letter to a friend or relation—it has no heading—who had remonstrated with her about

<sup>1</sup> This incident is related in an unpublished letter from Hobhouse to Byron.

*Glenarvon*, and also about the line she had taken in the case of the Byron separation.

' I am sorry you think so unkindly of me. . . . I am not malevolent in this instance. I may have ruined myself, but no other person alive, and had I chosen to be ill-natured, God knows, without deviating from truth—had I even spoken of all others with half the sincerity I have of Calantha—I had plenty of means. No mercy is ever shown to me. I am abused, misrepresented, vilified, and then it is expected I can bear all things in silence. All that I thought might harm the character of one living being I pulled out of the book. Of all people on earth Lord Byron is the last to accuse me. How he treated me, were I to tell it, might indeed harm him, but so far from wishing it he knows that I never have and never will betray him. . . . This novel may be stupid, may be unseemly for me to write, but is assuredly anything but malevolent. Were it known that at the time I published it people wrote to my husband to implore him to part with me, telling him everything most cruel of me—were it known that an attempt was made to prove me mad—that had not William firmly resisted, I had now been far from home, disgraced for ever, and under the care of those brutes who never more would have allowed me freedom to claim even assistance—were it further known that they got about Lord Melbourne and made him order me out of the house, many would sooner pity me than judge me with the severity they have.<sup>1</sup> For all this was before I sent my book out.

' You say in your letter to Lady M. something as if I were Lady Byron's advocate and confidante. I believe you will find yourself utterly mistaken. I do not fancy she would even extend her compassion to a reprobate like me, and though from my soul I pity her, as I knew that which ought to have made me fly to her and prevent her marriage—some day you will find that Lord Byron's imprudence betrayed to her a thousand circumstances which to this hour I believe Lady Noel and Mrs. Clarmont have not the remotest idea of. . . . Whatever my faults, do not judge of a heart that has disdained every mean revenge, and never will adopt that line but in one case when, by him who made me, I will disclose all—even upon oath, and die the next moment. I have been insulted, my letters shown, my words misrepresented, my gifts offered and worn by such a woman as Lady Oxford.<sup>2</sup> I can feel and I can resent. Time while it quells enthusiasm and love,

<sup>1</sup> There had been an attempt to arrange an amicable separation, but Caro had coaxed her William to relinquish the idea.

<sup>2</sup> Byron admitted that he gave one of Caroline's trinkets to Lady Oxford's little daughter, whom he celebrated as ' Ianthe.'

awakens worse feelings—and however guilty [I may be] to others there is no excuse—no not one for him.'

The publication in the autumn of the third Canto of *Childe Harold* (for which Murray paid £2,000), and its great success aroused an intense bitterness in Caroline's mind. It would seem as if she were jealous of Byron's popularity and felt that it was easier to take up the cudgels for another woman than to express resentment on her own account. And so she poured out her feelings in a letter to Murray, dated October 13, 1816 :

' Do you remember some time ago when you were justly indignant with Lord B, and said he was "done for"—that I said "by no means," and also the Macchiavellian advice I gave you ? Now, as it has proved so good in point of worldly policy will you allow me to offer you a little more with another view ? Be not dazzled by his success—be not thrown into wild delight because his genius has shone forth—misfortune and rage have occasioned this, and whenever he may speak of *himself* Lord Byron will succeed. Self is the sole inspirer of his genius—he cannot, like Homer, Dante, Virgil, Milton, Dryden, Spenser, Gray, Goldsmith, Tasso, write on other subjects well ; but what he feels he can describe extravagantly well, and therefore I never did doubt he would write again as at first. But, for God's sake, do not let this circumstance make you forget what a rogue he is. . . . As an admirer of genius, stand by him—as one who has been to you an advantageous Patron—stand by. As a friend even, for old affection's sake, stand by. But for my sake, for Lady Byron's sake, for the sake of honour, justice, every good feeling—never forget what he really is. The sun may shine upon a bit of broken glass till it glitters like a diamond, but if you take it up you will only cut your fingers. And though the world were again to be taken in by Lord Byron, neither you or I can be. Remember that mother and that child, and however *he* may thrive and they be forgot, still I say, bear in mind the night, for as sure as possible, soon or late, such perfidy is detected. And I swear to you that so far from living with him again, however his friends may countenance the report, Lady Byron would far rather die than do so. How she has behaved to him, you well know, and because she is too noble-minded to expose his baseness, never suffer your vanity nor your interest to forget it. Not Mr. Frere's praise, nor all the reviews in Christendom can give Lord Byron lustre in my eyes. When you justly despised him I tried to soften you against him—though not against his faults. But now I see your head will be turned by the enthusiasm two thou-

sand pounds' worth of verses will excite—excuse my reminding you of the truth. . . .

'One thing more I entreat you. Do not suffer Lady Byron's silence with respect to you (if it continues) to alter your opinion of her—as nothing can occasion it but just indignation. She saw you when her heart was breaking—when she knew you to believe the truth of her ill-usage—she spoke to you as to a friend—and she then saw you publish the most infamous verses<sup>1</sup> that ever yet were written—verses the flow and harmony of which cannot for a moment soothe the spirit of destestation and resentment which must arise in every feeling heart against their author. . . . I speak of her wrongs not mine—I was so wrong myself that I never dared resent what I knew was not the conduct of a man who had one honest feeling in him. But though the belief of his being at length detected and miserable and deserted might soften me, by him who created me I swear that if he ever rises more though I may die or ruin myself in the attempt, I will prove no contemptible enemy. Truth and fearlessness can stand even against genius unsupported by those qualities, and Lord Byron with all his powers, is a rogue, and what is equally bad—a coward. I feel that I write too warmly, but I dread lest this new and transient wreath round your Poet's head should so twist itself over yours that you will cease to remember what you well know. . . .'

Apparently, Murray made no answer to this violent attack. After all, in Regency days a man was not thought beyond the pale if he ill-treated a woman—especially if that woman was his wife. In November Caro was writing to ask if Murray were offended with her, or her letter.

'If so, I am sorry, but depend upon it, if after seven years' acquaintance<sup>2</sup> you choose to cast off what you ever termed your left hand, I have too much gratitude towards you to allow of it. I always write eagerly and in haste. I never read over what I have written: if therefore I said anything I ought not, pardon me.'

Caroline was a regular visitor at No. 50, and she treasured her friendship with John Murray. She wrote to him constantly—little notes begging him to come to her masquerade, or join her in the Devonshire House box to see Miss O'Neill, or to stay for a week-end at Brocket to attend a 'beautiful ball' at Hatfield. If he had allowed it, she would have lavished on him Marlborough

<sup>1</sup> The 'Fare thee well' verses. They were privately printed at first.

<sup>2</sup> Caroline had first met John Murray in January, 1813.

spaniels, game, fruit, flowers, tickets for the Elgin Marbles and permits for pike fishing at Brocket. On December 12 she wrote :

' It is strange that my visit to your house to-day has made me miserable. After all, what a life mine has been, and how singular our acquaintance ! . . . I had a thousand things to say to you but they were all forgotten the moment they said you were at home. Is not life strange ? If I believed him at any time unhappy would I not go through the fire to serve him ? That child of his—will it be like him ? But what is all this to me ? Your room speaks of him in every part of it, and I never see you without pain, yet it seems to me most unpleasant if I pass any length of time without seeing you, and what I can safely say I add—that I think you have been a sincere, upright and manly friend to both him and me through many trying scenes. . . . Perhaps I reproach myself for the violence with which I have presumed to judge and condemn another. Of all people on earth I am the last to do so. Who ever knew so little as myself how to command my own actions ? '

Sir Samuel Romilly committed suicide in 1818, and for some inexplicable reason Caroline made that incident an excuse for a long letter to Byron. So far as we know, it was her last letter to him.

' Permit me,' she begins, ' to write you a few words. You will see by the papers that Sir Samuel Romilly is dead. It was in a moment of phrenzy brought on by grief that he did this. His children, they say, feel it dreadfully. It is a cruel thing to do, but he had lost his mind, I am sure, at this time. Never do you do this, Lord Byron, never whatever may happen, if even a dog is left on earth who loves you—but I did not write to you to say this. I wrote because his death brought it to my mind—as everything does, and I remember you at the time when Percival was shot, and how much you felt it—your coming here—your seeing William affected—your being so deeply so yourself—all are present to me as if it were but yesterday. And though everything is changed since, yet events like these make the time between pass, and restore former sentiment.

' It is but a few months ago we saw Romilly surrounded by friends—happy without being over elate, but much moved when he passed Brooks's and then I thought of you, and thought how had you been there none would have rejoiced more.<sup>1</sup> And now it appears to me that you more than anyone except William Lamb, can feel for him—yet he is much censured. At the time of the

<sup>1</sup> Romilly was elected member for Westminster in July, 1818. He committed suicide three days after his wife's death on October 29, 1818.

death of Percival, when I had the misfortune to consider you as the dearest friend I possessed on earth, when I had willingly died to serve you, and felt for you what I believe no one ever did before or will, you promised me—do you remember—that whatever might happen, whatever my conduct might be, you would never cease to be my friend ? If this ever recurs to your mind—if one remembrance of the past ever comes back to plead for me, forgive me before I die. I have sinned against everyone on earth and against you—but from my soul I suffer for all I have done, and accuse no one but myself for all I have and shall suffer. May God protect and restore you—may I live to see you one day return and become all you may be—and, whether you believe it or not, in absence, in eternity, I am and ever have been your sincere friend.

' I saw Scrope Davis the other day and Lady F. Webster. Hobhouse is at Brighton. Your child, I am told, is clever and beautiful—Lady Byron ill and sorrowful. Lady Noel, who came to see me about three weeks back, seemed proud of that child, and said it was very like its father, and seemed not sorry as she said it. She mentioned that the way its head was put upon its neck was like yours.

' God bless you, my Lord, I am grieved for the past. William Lamb, though it be strange, likes you, and almost cries when he reads anything you have written. Many like you here—and you are dead to your country, tho' it, perhaps, is not dead to you. Poor Romilly, it breaks my heart to think what he has suffered. Forgive my writing this. We are all ill, and may soon be dead, and why should enmity be the only thing to live and thrive.'

In 1818 *Beppo* came out—anonymously at first. It was not everybody who recognised Byron's hand, for the satire was a new departure for him, though it was an imitation of Frere's *Whistlecraft*. But Caroline was not to be deceived. She was sick of 'moments of gloom, care-worn brows, mysterious personages, marble hearts and the whole of that which had deceived her and many others.'

' And so you have never heard of *Beppo*,' she wrote to one of Byron's friends. It might have been Hobhouse or Kinnaird—someone who could give her news of the poet.

' I think you said so at Devonshire House supper. Now Heaven fail in granting me pardon for all my offences if it is not by himself, and in his very best wit, as good as anything that Swift ever wrote—a flatterer would say better. I read it having taken an emetic for that headache which troubled me so much the night I sat beside you, and I must own it did delight me so that the emetic

failed in affecting me.<sup>1</sup> Now though this is not a pretty illustration of what should be felt on reading poetry, believe me it is emphatic and expresses much more than fairer words. After all it would be kind in you to tell me if it is, and how he is, and if he is ever again coming to England, and when I shall see that new child<sup>2</sup>—I who so rapturously, so absurdly, yet so sincerely adored the first, for though I hope I hate that man whose genius lifts him up to Heaven, yet whose unkindness to some who were sincere to him makes him, I think, everything that is cruel and bad, yet though he has done so little to entitle him to happiness hereafter, I do from my heart like to hear he is happy and enjoying himself here. You who have humanity in you may let me know something of him, and be assured I shall not on that account consider myself as in the least forgiven or liked by you. Besides, I have done with everything of that sort now—am grown sickly, old, *judicious*, and look very little out of the direct line that leads to the grave.<sup>3</sup> Everyone around me seems hastening there, and people look sad enough to make even a gay heart melancholy. At Almack's<sup>4</sup> the oldest were grown gray and the middle-aged ugly, and there was not a happy look even on one young face. No wonder you preferred to stay away. I know you live in other society—I know also the state of your feelings for me—perfect indifference were it not for a spice of dislike peppered with a little rankling and yet contemptuous displeasure.

'Now remember life is short. Forgive—for there is no one on earth who would go further or do more to serve you and him than I would. And pray observe that I have been hardly used myself—not to speak of being left, cut, mocked at, teased. . . . I think Lord Byron has behaved rather generously to me. He had the power to retaliate in such a manner that I could never have shown my face again. I was in his power. I have done everything at every time to offend him most. It is rather manly, rather noble—something a little like what I believed him once—not lifting up his sword to crush a fly—for in mind and talent I am but as such to him, though God knows I think in attachment and generosity I am as far above him. If you think it not beneath you to forgive a woman who asks you to do so, and almost confesses herself in the wrong, do so at once. I should be happier, and perhaps live to prove to you that I am neither presumptuous or ungrateful.

'Yours most sincerely,  
C. L.'

<sup>1</sup> A most unusual tribute to the interest of a poem.

<sup>2</sup> Allegra.

<sup>3</sup> She was only thirty-three.

<sup>4</sup> It was in this year that Lady Cowper said she had fought a battle for Caroline, and put her name down for Almack's in spite of Lady Jersey's teeth.

'How very clever I think *Beppo*, and still more that Mr. Frere never could write anything like it.'

When the first Cantos of *Don Juan* came out Caroline was not at all pleased, and as usual, spoke her mind freely :

'I think there is something fine in the conception and execution of *Mazeppa*,' she wrote to Murray, 'there is also something pretty. The *Don Juan* is neither witty nor in very good taste, and the couplet about Romilly is infamous ;<sup>1</sup> there is not the razor edge of satire to make it go down, and the levity of the style ill-accords with the subject. . . . Most of the lines are weak, lengthy, and though to strangers it must appear incoherent nonsense, to those who penetrate further it will excite contempt and disgust.'<sup>2</sup>

Caroline amused herself by appearing as Don Juan at a masquerade at Almack's (in 1820) attended by a group of little devils hired from Covent Garden. According to the *Morning Chronicle*, there were too many devils ; in fact there seemed to be a whole legion of them, and so little inclined were they to do their spiriting gently that they appeared determined to carry the whole group off to Tartarus.<sup>3</sup>

This same year there were rumours that Byron was returning to England, and Caroline thought that Murray had gone to meet him. She writes to beg him (Murray) to come to Brocket, and adds :

'Yours quite disturbed my mind, for want of your telling me how he [Byron] looks, what he says, if he is grown fat, if he is no uglier than he used to be, if he is good-humoured or cross-grained, pulling his brows down—if his hair curls or is straight as somebody said, if he is going to stay long, if you went to Dover and a great deal more which, if you had the smallest tact or aught else, you would have written long ago.'

At this time Caroline was finding interest and distraction in novel-writing. Her *Graham Hamilton*, written in 1820, attracted

<sup>1</sup> Byron's bitterness against Romilly was due to the fact that Romilly had accepted a retainer for the poet, but had transferred his services to Lady Byron. Byron describes his wife as

'An all in all sufficient self-director  
Like the lamented late Sir Samuel Romilly,  
The Law's expounder and the State's corrector,  
Whose suicide was almost an anomaly—  
One sad example more that all is vanity  
(The jury brought their verdict in "Insanity.")'

<sup>2</sup> In 1819 Caro wrote and published *A New Canto of Don Juan*. But it was feeble stuff.

<sup>3</sup> When Byron heard of this he said 'I only wonder that she went so far as "The Theatre" for "The Devils," having them so much more natural at home.'

little attention, but *Ada Reis*, published by Murray in 1823, an incoherent Oriental tale, of the *Vathek* type, was her own favourite. The ever-kind William Lamb took an interest in the book, and wrote to Murray that if the fault of its design and structure could be got over, he thought that he could put her in the way of writing up the last part, 'of giving it something of strength, spirit and novelty, and of making it at once more unusual and more interesting.' But now the end was drawing near and it is well known how that end came. There was the news of Byron's death, and before Caroline had time to recover from the shock, his hearse rolled past the gates of Brocket. She lost what little self-control remained to her, and, at last, a separation was arranged. But Lamb was not relentless. After a time she was allowed to go back to live at her favourite Brocket, and he often rode down to visit her. There she died in 1828, in her forty-third year. She could have no better epitaph than her own touching words to Godwin :

'I am like the wreck of a little boat, for I never came up to the sublime and beautiful—merely a little gay merry boat, which perhaps stranded itself at Vauxhall or London Bridge.'

(*To be continued.*)

#### AFTER THE STORM.

THE winds have robbed my garden of its grace,  
And ruined many flowers in a night.  
Blustering thieves that, like a skyey race  
Of gypsies, wait the passing of the light  
To do their depredations in the dark  
And pilfer when all honest hands are still.  
The wrecks they leave are shattered, and as stark  
As victims of some plague or potent ill.

Down on the gravel hollyhocks lie prone  
And half their buds unopened ! Cruel Hours  
That could not leave my little plot alone,  
Nor spare my homely acreage its flowers.  
O vicious tumult, there was peace before ;  
Now Summer's Pride will come this way no more.

JOHN GIBBINS.

**THE MISS MARTINSON-BOMMERS' ALMIGHTY.**

BY ALLAN GOVAN.

THE Miss Martinson-Bommers were as much part of Aurangpur as the little Hindu shrine and the ruined mosque and the lotus-studded tank. The other Europeans were birds of passage, whereas the Miss Martinson-Bommers were as fixed as Fate.

In some long-past era their father had been a Collector in the neighbourhood. When he died, Miss Agnes Martinson-Bommer had condescended to accept a post as governess in the palace of the local rajah. That had fixed the two ladies in India for good.

They were now long past the age for filling any post, and how they contrived to live was one of India's many mysteries.

They were really dreadfully poor ; but for years they had striven, with complete insuccess, to prevent the other Europeans from suspecting it.

They occupied a tiny bungalow that belonged to a well-to-do Parsi—and that Parsi deserved to go to heaven, or wherever Parsis do go ; for he never failed to treat the two ladies with the courtesy which only the East knows, and he allowed them to live on in the place for years after they had ceased to be able to pay him an adequate rent.

They kept one servant. His name was Govind. And in Aurangpur Govind was as well known as the Miss Martinson-Bommers themselves.

Govind was a Hindu of sorts, whose ambition in life was to live exclusively on palm toddy. At one time or another Govind had been employed in every one of the dozen or so European bungalows in Aurangpur, but his liking for palm toddy in its most fermented state always drove him back to the Miss Martinson-Bommers', where he could at least get house-room and enough to keep body and soul together. Govind was a 'boy' when he was employed elsewhere, but he went up a step when he fell back on the Miss Martinson-Bommers—he became 'butler.'

How old the Miss Martinson-Bommers were, was another of India's mysteries. The heat and the fever had so shrivelled them that they looked somewhere round about a hundred, which they most certainly were not. In their time they had had every single one of India's delightful and peculiar diseases, and how they were

able to exist year in year out in a place as hot as Aurangpur, was yet another of India's mysteries.

They had never been home since Miss Agnes condescended to take that post in the palace of the local rajah. More than that, it was years since they had been to a hill-station! It was one of their little fictions that they never felt the heat.

The *mem-sahib* who lived in the house nearest to the Miss Martinson-Bommers' bungalow usually took it upon herself to mother the old ladies. For three years Mrs. Carter had done what she could for them, which was precious little; for it is extremely difficult to do anything for two old women who are as proud as Lucifer—one of the unfortunate things about charity is that there must be somebody to whom to be charitable, and the Miss Martinson-Bommers refused to admit that they ever were in distress.

When Mrs. Carter was preparing to shake the dust of Aurangpur from her feet she handed over the care of the Miss Martinson-Bommers to the *mem-sahib* who was taking over her bungalow—Mrs. Sculthorpe.

Mrs. Sculthorpe had now been the official guardian of the old ladies for a month. And she was troubled.

Miss Clare, the younger of the sisters, was ill—she was getting fever every other day.

'She shouldn't be here in May,' the mission doctor told Mrs. Sculthorpe when she asked him deliberately. 'Her heart isn't at all good.' And having said that, the doctor was significantly silent.

There was no need for him to say any more. Mrs. Sculthorpe knew all about Aurangpur.

From early April, Mrs. Sculthorpe knew only too well, the sun would get stronger and stronger, and Aurangpur would get hotter and hotter until, before the rains broke in June, it would be nearly a half hotter than England during a heat-wave. All day, every door and window in the European houses would be shut tight to keep out that blistering heat, and those inside would be dragging themselves about in the eerie stillness in a state bordering on coma. And that would go on for days and days and days! It would go on until the relentless sun had sapped every scrap of vitality out of his victims and had reduced them to tortured things with frayed, raw nerves.

But by the beginning of May, every *mem-sahib* who valued her life would have fled to the hills; and if the men-folk could escape even for a week, they would do so.

Mrs. Sculthorpe had arranged to leave for Mount Abu in the first

week of May, a fortnight hence. And the thought of going off and leaving those old ladies on the plains, made her feel thoroughly mean.

But, really, there was nothing she could do about it. Going to a hill-station was an expensive business. She herself would be doing the thing as cheaply as she possibly could—she and Jack hadn't a single rupee that they couldn't find a good use for, with two boys at home to be boarded and educated. . . .

Some friends had been over to Mrs. Sculthorpe's for bridge, and while they were sitting chatting for a moment before going home, Mrs. Sculthorpe spoke about Miss Clare.

'It's a crying shame that the poor old thing can't get away for May,' she said. 'I put a straight question to Doctor Ramsay this morning ; and from what he said, or, rather, from what he refrained from saying, it seems as if it's going to be a gamble whether Miss Clare will get through.'

'What Miss Agnes would do if she were left alone, I can't imagine.' Like Mrs. Sculthorpe, the woman who spoke was sympathetic, but she could do nothing about it.

'These two old women are a tragedy'—it was one of the men speaking now. 'To think of them left alone in a place like this !'

'I wonder—eh—would it be possible, do you think—couldn't we all club together and put up enough to let them go to the hills for a month ?' The speaker was a comparative new-comer to Aurangpur ; none of the others, who knew the Miss Martinson-Bommers, would have dreamed of making such a suggestion.

'Pass round the hat for these two old duchesses ! The shock of learning that anybody had so much as thought of suggesting such a thing would do them more harm than the plains in May.' The man who spoke laughed, but there was no unkindness in his laughter ; it was too full of pity for that.

It was Jack Sculthorpe who took up the new-comer's suggestion and carried it a step further.

'It might just be possible,' he said thoughtfully. 'If the money were handed over to one of the ladies, here, and she invited the Miss Martinson-Bommers as her guests . . .'

Mrs. Sculthorpe's eyes shone. If the suggestion had been made when she and Jack were alone she would probably have kissed him. As it was, she contented herself with crying enthusiastically :

'I'm certain it could be done that way. They would never suspect.'

'You're their legal guardian, Ivy ; would you be prepared—'

20 THE MISS MARTINSON-BOMMERS' ALMIGHTY.

'I'd be only too glad.' Mrs. Sculthorpe spoke quickly, anxious to clinch the thing before the enthusiasm of the others began to wane.

'If you like, I'll call round with you and see the people in the station,' the woman who had last spoken offered.

Mrs. Sculthorpe was trembling with excitement now.

'That's ever so good of you. Hadn't we better begin with ourselves——?'

That's how the fund was started. The committee of two there and then worked out, on the back of a scoring-card, how much would be required. They divided the total by the number of European families in the station, and so got at what would be expected from each.

Three days later they had the required amount.

Mrs. Sculthorpe was dreadfully nervous when she called to invite the Miss Martinson-Bommers to be her guests for the month of May.

In the first place, the Miss Martinson-Bommers didn't like you to call at any old time. You were expected to call only when invited, by chit sent round by the more or less sober Govind. The Miss Martinson-Bommers had to cook their own food, and no Europeans cook their own food in India. Worse than that, it was long since they had been able to afford a *dhabie*, so they had to do their own washing—they always hung it up inside so that nobody should see it and suspect that they didn't employ a washerman. Still worse; no *mem-sahib* in India sweeps and dusts—that is done by a gentleman called the *hamal*. When he was sober Govind usually condescended to do the dusting; but a lot of dust can gather in India in a few hours, and Govind sometimes lived solely on palm toddy for days. On those occasions, the Miss Martinson-Bommers had to do the sweeping and dusting in addition to the other work. Besides, the coir mats had to be in position, laid so that you might not notice how worn they were, and the covers on the chairs, and a whole lot of other things had to be arranged in such a way that you shouldn't know that the Miss Martinson-Bommers weren't quite so well off as when their father the Collector was alive.

And another reason why you didn't call on the Miss Martinson-Bommers just when you took a fancy to was that the Miss Martinson-Bommers were 'Civil Service.' The Miss Martinson-Bommers were really condescending when they received *mem-sahibs* like Mrs. Sculthorpe, who was only 'Commercial,' and obviously they had to maintain a certain distance.

So, as has been hinted, Mrs. Sculthorpe felt just a trifle uneasy as she made her way across the dusty compound of the little bungalow.

She had chosen the time carefully—late afternoon, when all the work would be likely to be finished, and the ladies sitting back as if the place were filled with servants.

Her luck was holding. The tiny sitting-room suggested that bare feet had been shuffling about it all day, and nimble brown fingers at work on it. Miss Agnes called ‘Butler!’ and Govind, mercifully sober, appeared. In her grandest manner Miss Agnes instructed Govind to bring tea.

Mrs. Sculthorpe asked Miss Clare how her fever was to-day. It was much better—the Miss Martinson-Bommers’ illnesses were always ‘much better.’ It had only been a slight touch of fever, and it had almost gone now. Mrs. Sculthorpe was uncertain whether she ought to risk giving the invitation at once, or whether she had better wait until after tea—she wondered vaguely if there used to be a rule about that amongst ‘Civil Service’ people. At the last moment her courage failed her, and she waited.

Miss Agnes presided in a stately way over the old and rather battered Indian-silver teapot, and the meal, which consisted of bread and butter and a piece of not-so-new sponge cake, succeeded in suggesting a lord mayor’s banquet.

When she at last tendered her invitation, Mrs. Sculthorpe felt that she did it badly, clumsily.

But the sudden light that spread over the Miss Martinson-Bommers’ worn, lined faces drove out all Mrs. Sculthorpe’s fears; for she could read the old ladies’ thoughts as surely as if they had spoken them aloud. The two old women were, in thought, escaping from the secret round of duties. They were seeing food being brought to them which they hadn’t themselves prepared. They were breathing again the crisp, life-giving air that is a joy of joys to all who have grizzled on India’s plains. They were drinking unboiled water, climbing into beds that had no mosquito-nets, and sleeping under a blanket! They were seeing a vision of the heavens opened.

The invitation had come so unexpectedly that the old ladies were lifted completely out of themselves—it was years since anything really good had happened to them. Miss Agnes had dropped her stately manner, and her voice was only the rather broken voice of a poor old woman when she said the conventional words:

‘It’s—it’s extremely good of you to ask us, Mrs. Sculthorpe.’ When Miss Clare added the other conventional phrase: ‘It’s

22 THE MISS MARTINSON-BOMMERS' ALMIGHTY.

very good of you, indeed, Mrs. Sculthorpe,' there was a hint of tears in her eyes.

'I don't happen to know anybody who's going to Mount Abu this season, so Jack thought we would be company for one another'; and before the old ladies could get a chance to say anything more, Mrs. Sculthorpe hurried on to questions of when they should go and what train they should catch.

An hour later she took leave of two old women who, in their joyous excitement, were still all atremble.

It was Monday when Mrs. Sculthorpe proffered her invitation. She arranged that they should all travel up on Saturday, when Jack could go with them and see them safely installed in their hotel.

In the interval Mrs. Sculthorpe kept away from the old ladies' bungalow as much as she could, for it was painful to her to watch their attempts to show their gratitude and at the same time maintain the fiction that they were perfectly accustomed to receive such invitations.

Also, when she called, Mrs. Sculthorpe saw evidences that the old ladies were working feverishly at the furbishing up of their wardrobes—at Mount Abu all the ladies would dress for dinner, and quite a number of light dresses are required at a hill-station even by two old ladies. Mrs. Sculthorpe would fain have offered a few things from her own wardrobe, but she knew that she couldn't dare.

The tonic effect of looking forward to a change of scene seemed to be doing the old ladies good already, although it had not succeeded in chasing away Miss Clare's fever; only the hill air would do that. But they were brighter, more natural, more human than Mrs. Sculthorpe had ever known them to be. For the first time she began to realise that they were two very nice old ladies.

It was on Friday that the tragedy happened—just after tiffin. It was Govind who was responsible for it.

Miss Clare was in bed, and Miss Agnes had had tiffin in lonely state. After he had cleared away, Govind returned and asked Miss Agnes if the Miss Sahibs wanted him to go with them to Mount Abu.

When the Miss Martinson-Bommers went to hill-stations in their younger days they probably always took their butler with them. But in their present financial position, and going as they were as somebody's guests, such a thing was not to be thought of. Miss Agnes told Govind that his services would not be required—and

then it occurred to her that she had never mentioned to him that they were going to the hills. She asked :

' Who informed you that the Miss Sahib and I were going to Mount Abu ? '

' Servants all knowing Miss Sahibs going to Mount Abu. Sculthorpe *Mem-sahib's* boy telling me *sahibs* and *mem-sahibs* all club and get money for Miss Sahibs to go.'

Miss Agnes's face was already so pale that it couldn't go paler when the blood drained from it. She was conscious of a numbing feeling creeping over her. She stood quite motionless, even her brain hardly alive—only enough alive to register a dull, sickening pain.

After a moment some part of herself that seemed to be bent on refusing to believe what the other part of herself had accepted at once, asked :

' Are you—are you certain about this, butler ? Are you certain about the *sahibs* and the *mem-sahibs* getting the money ? '

' Sculthorpe *Mem-sahib's* boy telling me,' Govind reiterated.

Mechanically Miss Agnes dismissed Govind with an ' All right, butler.' Then she shook her brain into full activity—and what before had been merely a dull, aching pain, became suddenly an agony.

For a time her brain refused to obey her commands. It would only think along one line—her own and her sister's years of striving to hide their poverty had been in vain ! The whole station knew how poor they were. The Europeans in the station had ' passed round the hat ' for them. All the little devices which she and Clare had adopted to hide their poverty must have been seen through ! Miss Agnes bowed her proud old head, and knew the very depths of shame.

At last, with an effort, she forced her mind away from that one line of thought, and realised, with a pitiful little gasp of pain, that the thing for which she and her sister had been living during these past few days had been snatched from them. She and Clare were now doomed to live in Aurangpur through the heat of May . . . with a mirage of a gloriously cool hill-station continually before their eyes. Miss Agnes stared at that mirage, and her thoughts were a searing agony.

She closed her eyes to shut out the mirage, and forced her thinking to pass on again.

Clare would have to live on the plains through May ! But could

she live through another May in Aurangpur ? She and Clare had always put a brave front on Clare's health—they had put a brave front on everything. But, actually, they had no illusions about Clare's condition. There swept over the old lady the fear of being absolutely alone in the world, and she was tempted—— Yes, why shouldn't she forget what she had just learned ? Why shouldn't she forget it, for Clare's sake ? A month at the hills would give Clare a new lease of life . . . !

Then the thin old lips came together firmly. The Almighty wouldn't ask them to sacrifice the one thing they had left—their justifiable pride. The Almighty would see them through, as He had seen them through before ! To think otherwise was to be lacking in faith. No ; she would tell Clare, then she would send for Mrs. Sculthorpe and would point out to her that she had taken a liberty.

Half an hour later, with her sister's knowledge and consent, Miss Agnes was writing a chit to Mrs. Sculthorpe asking her if she would be good enough to call some time in the afternoon.

Mrs. Sculthorpe was a woman of premonitions. When she received Miss Agnes's formal note she had a premonition of disaster. The premonition grew stronger and stronger every moment until she was in the Miss Martinson-Bommers' tiny sitting-room when, at sight of Miss Agnes's compressed lips, it was finally confirmed.

In her precise phraseology Miss Agnes asked :

'Mrs. Sculthorpe, were there others associated with you in the invitation which you extended to my sister and myself ?'

Mrs. Sculthorpe, dear, simple soul ! was the very worst woman in the whole station to whom such a question could have been put. The truth could be read plainly in her eyes. There was no need for her to stumble and stutter :

'Some of—some of my friends thought it would be nice if we—if I——'

'Did the whole station contribute to the sum which was to be used to send my sister and myself to the hills ?'

'We thought it would—it would do both of you so much good,' Mrs. Sculthorpe hedged weakly.

Miss Agnes spoke slowly, weighing every word before using it, trying to be firm without being discourteous.

'Please be good enough to thank every one who contributed, and

kindly say, from me, that my sister and myself are not in need of assistance of any description.'

Mrs. Sculthorpe suddenly threw discretion to the winds.

'But, Miss Agnes, the thing that matters is your getting to a hill-station, not whether I, or somebody else, is providing the money to allow you to go.'

'Mrs. Sculthorpe'—Miss Agnes spoke in the tone of one who is sure of herself—'the Almighty has always provided for my sister and myself; He will have us in His keeping to the end.'

To Mrs. Sculthorpe it seemed that the Almighty might quite probably have arranged to provide for these two old ladies through the means of the Europeans in the station. But, or so it appeared, the Miss Martinson-Bommers' Almighty was a proud Deity who did things only in the Martinson-Bommer way. Mrs. Sculthorpe felt that she wasn't clever enough to go into the question with Miss Agnes, so, instead, she went straight to what seemed to her to matter.

'But your sister simply must get away from here in May,' she insisted, her fear of Miss Agnes pushed into the background for the time being by the urge of her motherly concern.

Miss Agnes was reverting more and more every minute to the attitude which she and her sister had assumed for years.

'If or when my sister and I feel that we ought to go to the hills, we will go. The Europeans in the station were taking an unwarranted liberty when they took it upon themselves—'

But at that Mrs. Sculthorpe, ordinarily the meekest and mildest of women, flared up; and she gave Miss Agnes the best talking-to that she had had in the whole course of her proud life. She told her she was a foolish old woman, who was sacrificing her sister to her pride. Unlike Miss Agnes, Mrs. Sculthorpe didn't choose her words; she used the first that came, and they were all the more forceful for that very reason.

Her tirade was at its height when, through the *chic* that hung across the door leading to the little hall, came Miss Clare, in her shabby old dressing-gown, so thin and frail and white that she looked more like a spectre than a living woman.

Mrs. Sculthorpe stopped short. She knew at once that her voice had reached across the hall to the bedroom. Miss Clare had heard every word!

Mrs. Sculthorpe pulled herself together. She had obviously failed to make an impression on Miss Agnes; she wouldn't fail with Miss Clare.

But before she could begin, Miss Clare was speaking.

'I thought it better to come and take part in the discussion, in case my sister might be tempted to do, for my sake, what she would refuse to do for her own.'

Mrs. Sculthorpe stared at Miss Clare. Then she stared still harder at Miss Agnes . . . for Miss Agnes had begun to cry! And it was terrible crying—not the whimpering of a weak old woman in trouble, but the agonised weeping of a soul that knows utter desolation.

Miss Clare crossed over to her sister, laid her skeleton-thin hand on her shoulder, and told her to be brave. She invoked the Martinson-Bommers' own Almighty, who would see them through in the Martinson-Bommer way, without the necessity of a thing so hurtful to the Martinson-Bommer pride as charity.

And as she looked on, Mrs. Sculthorpe knew how these two frail old ladies had contrived to live for years in Aurangpur and remain the Miss Martinson-Bommers. When either tended to weaken, the other at once became firm! . . . No; there was no hope at all of getting these women to accept charity. And Miss Agnes was still weeping in a way that tore one's heart.

All at once Mrs. Sculthorpe felt the hot tears starting to her own eyes. With a gasp of dismay she scrambled to her feet, and fled.

That night at the gymkhana Mrs. Sculthorpe was taken over to the tennis-court to be introduced to a young man who, she was informed, had come to Aurangpur for three months to relieve another man.

The friend who proposed to do the introducing—it was the woman who was the other lady of the committee—never got a chance to carry out her intention; for the moment Mrs. Sculthorpe saw the young man, she cried, 'Oh, hullo, Bill!—where did you spring from?'

The friend explained: 'Mr. Martinson-Keen has been over on the Calcutta side for—' She stopped abruptly at sight of the peculiar look in Mrs. Sculthorpe's eyes.

'You were only Keen before, Bill; when did you become Martinson-Keen?'

The young man began a lengthy explanation about a relative who had died and left his father her modest fortune and her name.

But Mrs. Sculthorpe wasn't listening.

'The Almighty is maybe on our side yet!' she said suddenly,

and just a trifle enigmatically. 'I want to talk to you,' she added, when the young man stared at her. 'Come over here, where we can get peace. . . . You come, too,' and she dragged the other woman with her.

'You'd best have a drink—you're going to need it,' she told young Martinson-Keen when they got seated. 'Listen, Bill. You've got two old relatives in Aurangpur, and you're going to call on them to-morrow evening as ever was. You're going to say that the mater told you before you sailed for India that you had two several-times-removed cousins in the Bombay Presidency somewhere, and she gave you explicit instructions to look them up if ever you got the chance.'

'Here, I say! This is clearly raving lunacy. I haven't got a relative who was ever east of Dover—'

'Don't talk, Bill—listen . . .' and Mrs. Sculthorpe told young Martinson-Keen all about the Miss Martinson-Bommers. 'You're going to go to them as the direct representative of the Almighty—their own special Almighty—and you're going to ask them to be your guests at Mount Abu for a month. You're spending a long week-end there, and you'll take them up with you—I'll arrange about the long week-end with your *burra-sahib*.'

Young Martinson-Keen tried to find reasons—and most of those he found were quite good reasons—why he shouldn't take on the job, but Mrs. Sculthorpe talked him down.

'Get a notebook, or a piece of note-paper or something. We'll tell you everything we know about the old ladies' relatives. You've got to memorise it, and decide which remote branch of the Martinson-Bommer family you belong to. . . . And to-morrow evening you've got to lie as you never lied before . . . and may God prosper you in every single lie.'

When the old ladies returned from Mount Abu they were in a forgiving mood, so they forgave Mrs. Sculthorpe—not altogether, but very nearly.

They were in a position to be magnanimous, for hadn't they been proved to be right? Hadn't the Almighty sent someone at the very right moment; a relative from whom they could accept hospitality without loss of dignity or pride?

Well, it may be that the Almighty *did* arrange it all that way. Who are we that we should make pronouncements upon the ways of the Almighty?

## SHAKESPEARE'S ROSES.

BY ELEANOUR SINCLAIR ROHDE.

WHEN William Langham, one of the great herbalists of Shakespeare's time and author of *The Garden of Health*, wrote of roses, he set forth their greatest virtue thus—'Roses do comfort the heart.' It is, I think, impossible to look at the restful old-fashioned beauty of the roses of Shakespeare's day, and to smell their fragrance, without thinking of Langham's pleasant words, for these roses do indeed comfort the heart as no modern roses can.

Shakespeare mentions roses nearly a hundred times, and specifically the musk rose, the white rose of the House of York, the red rose of the House of Lancaster, the Provençal rose, the Damask rose, the York and Lancaster rose, the Rose of May, the dog rose and eglantine or sweet briar.

The musk rose, *R. moschata*, adorned Titania's bower :

With sweet musk roses and with eglantine ;  
There sleeps Titania, sometime of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight.'

Evidently it was her favourite rose, for did she not specially enjoin her attendant fairies 'to kill cankers in the Musk Rosebuds'? Why did Shakespeare choose the musk rose to adorn Titania's bower? Probably for the same reason that he chose eglantine or sweet briar. For these are the only roses that scent the air around them, most roses being 'fast of their smells.' Bacon extolled the musk rose for scenting the air 'where it comes and goes like the warbling of music.' Shakespeare's lines also suggest the music of their fragrance. It is strange indeed that this lovely but somewhat tender climbing rose is so seldom grown now, not only for its musky fragrance but the beauty of its immense clusters of blooms. The type has white flowers, but there are several varieties, one with pale yellow and another with pink flowers. In Victorian times the varieties were more numerous, the most sweetly scented being Princesse de Nassau.

Musk roses vary considerably in fragrance, and like sweet briar the scent is stronger in a still moist atmosphere. Bacon,

Shakespeare and Keats all extol this rose, but take considerable poetic licence in regard to its time of flowering. Bacon described it as July-flowering; in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, it was in bloom that night; and Keats wrote of it as 'mid-May's eldest child.' Musk roses are late summer-flowering even in mild parts.

According to most authorities the origin of the white rose of England—*R. alba*—is lost in the mists of antiquity. The variety Maiden's Blush is the 'Incarnation Rose,' described by Parkinson in his *Paradisus*, and probably the Incarnation Rose mentioned by Turner in his *Herbal*. This was the rose of the House of York, and it figures conspicuously in the scene of the quarrel between Plantagenet and Somerset in the Temple Gardens—

‘the milk-white Rose  
With whose sweet smell the air shall be perfumed.’

*R. alba* is seldom grown now, and even the well-known Maiden's Blush, once such a favourite with cottagers, is far from common in gardens.

This rose is conspicuous not only for its beauty and vigorous growth, but for its peculiarly exquisite fragrance and the curious 'blush' which suffuses the petals. It is decidedly not pale pink. The old writers were very accurate in their description of colours, and Parkinson describes Maiden Blush as 'of a bright pale murrey colour'—i.e. a very pale mulberry. Redouté, the famous French painter, styled this rose 'le grand Maiden's Blush des Anglais.'

The red rose of England is a variety of *R. alba*, and Parkinson in his *Paradisus* describes these roses as 'the most ancient and knowne Roses to our Countrey, whether naturall or no I know not, but assumed by our precedent Kings of all others to bee cognizances of their dignitie, the white rose and the red.' There is a very ancient tradition, mentioned by Pliny, that Albion was so called either from 'its white cliffs washed by the sea or from the white roses with which it abounds.' Shakespeare frequently refers to red roses and in many cases he may have had the red rose of England in his mind, notably in the touching description of the little princes murdered in the Tower:

‘girdling one another  
Within their alabaster innocent arms;  
Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,  
Which in their summer beauty kiss'd each other.’

Shakespeare does not mention the York and Lancaster rose by name, but this is obviously the variegated rose to which he refers several times, notably in Sonnet XCIX :

‘The Roses fearfully in thorns did stand,  
One blushing shame, another white despair,  
A third, nor red nor white, had stolen of both  
And to his robbery had annexed thy breath.’

There are two variegated roses, the one a Gallica versicolour and the other a Damask versicolour rose. The Gallica versicolour with striped petals has for centuries been known as *Rosa Mundi*, and possibly may be connected with the twelfth-century Fair Rosamond, whose name it commemorates. The Damask versicolour has an occasional red petal, and according to the leading rosarians this is the true York and Lancaster rose. Of these two variegated roses *Rosa Mundi* is indisputably the finest. Its bold colouring and conspicuous golden stamens made it a favourite with the old painters, who frequently depicted it in bowls of mixed flowers.

The red rose of England must not be confused with the red rose of the House of Lancaster, which is quite a different rose. Probably this was the variety of *Rosa gallica*, brought back by Thibaut le Chansonnier from Palestine to Provins in the thirteenth century. It was the rose most commonly used for medicinal purposes throughout the Middle Ages. Edmund Crouchback, Earl of Lancaster, son of Henry III of England, became Count of Champagne by marriage and he adopted the badge of the red rose. As his cognisance it figures on his tomb in Westminster Abbey. Shakespeare mentions the red rose of Lancaster and the white rose of York at least thirty times. Even in Victorian times the red rose of Lancaster was commonly grown, and being used for medicinal purposes it was commonly known as ‘The Apothecary’s Rose.’ This rose is still obtainable.

Hamlet’s ‘Provincial Roses on my razed shoes’ refer presumably to Provençal roses and probably to the most famous member of this large family of roses—the old cabbage rose. It is amongst the most ancient of garden roses. Pliny mentioned it and possibly it is also the many-petalled rose mentioned by Homer. In spite of its incomparable scent and beauty this rose is rarely grown now and indeed it seems to have lost its old vitality. In the early years of the nineteenth century there were about a

hundred varieties of Provence roses and a few of them are still obtainable, notably the Rose des Peintres, with incurving petals and raised centre, which figures so largely in van Huysum's and other old Dutch artists' paintings; also the charming Rose de Meaux, named after the flower-loving Bishop of Meaux—Dominique Séguier—appointed to the see of Meaux in 1637. Petite de Hollande is another dainty member of the Provence family, but the flowers have not the exquisite fragrance of the Rose de Meaux.

The Damask rose which figures in Autolycus' song:

'Flowers as sweet as Damask roses'

cultivated from time immemorial in the East and traditionally introduced into these islands by the Crusaders is still obtainable, but rarely grown now. The variety *trigentipetala* is, however, extensively grown in the Balkans for attar of roses.

Which was the 'Rose of May' to which Laertes compared Ophelia:

'O Rose of May,  
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia'?

I think there is very little doubt Laertes referred to the cinnamon rose noted for its early flowering. In Victorian times this rose, a native of Europe and North Asia, was called the 'Whitsuntide rose.' Gerard, who grew it in his Holborn garden, states that the scent is in its leaves. It is difficult, however, to trace any scent of cinnamon in the leaves, though the flowers have a very faint spicy odour.

The only native roses mentioned by Shakespeare are the dog rose and the sweet briar. Few leaf scents can compare with that of the eglantine, extolled by Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare. In the old rose books, notably Andrews' *Roses* (1817), there are numerous paintings of the varieties of sweet briar now lost to cultivation. The greatest loss of all is surely the double sweet briar, which in Andrews' book is named *R. eglanteria multiplex*, a variety Shakespeare probably knew, for Gerard, who grew it, describes it as a rose commonly grown in London gardens.

'We have in our London gardens another sweet Briar, having greater leaves and much sweeter, the floures likewise are greater and somewhat double, exceeding sweet of smell.'

In Shakespeare's day roses were valued not only for their beauty

and perfume, but also for their medicinal, culinary and cosmetic uses. There are various references to rose-water :

' Let one attend him with a silver basin  
Full of Rose water and bestrewed with flowers '

and the distilled water of roses :

' But earthlier happy is the Rose distilled  
Than that which, withering on the virgin Thorn,  
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.'

In those days, however, the greatest virtue was ascribed to dew on roses and particularly to dew warmed by the rays of the early morning sun :

' So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not  
To those fresh morning drops upon the rose.'

It is pleasant to visualise a still-room of Shakespeare's day—the busy housewife and her attendants, the stills and the masses of fragrant rose petals. For roses were used more than any other flowers. The still-room books of the period, notably Sir Hugh Platt's dainty little volume *Delights for Ladies*, are full of recipes for rose water, rose tablets, cakes of roses, syrups of roses, conserve of roses, rose honey, rose ointment, oil of roses, rose-drops and rossoly, rose vinegar, to say nothing of flavouring wines and cakes with rose water. Further, they valued roses not only for food and medicine, but also for their effect on the mind—' Dry roses put to the nose to smell do comfort the brayne and the herte and quickeneth the spryte.'

*A FRONTIER EXPEDITION—OLD STYLE.*

BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL R. H. ELLIOT.

OPEN a map of India and Burma and you will notice that along the northern boundary runs the great chain of the Himalayas, turning at right-angles at its eastern end, to sweep in high-lying country through China and the Shan states. At the angle where the mountainous chain turns south, a range of hills cuts obliquely from the north-east to the south-west and includes the country of the Nagas, the Manipuris, the Lushais and the Chins. These hills run up to 9,000 feet or more and consist of razor-back ranges with steep arms jutting off from them on either side. They were formerly the happy hunting-ground of head-hunters and raiders, until slowly and irresistibly they were brought under the influence of the *pax Britannica*. Many ugly incidents marred this peaceful invasion, including the treacherous murder of British officers within the fort at Manipur in 1891, and that of others from time to time in the Lushai hills. The heads of the victims were often taken away, impaled on tall bamboos and exhibited thus at the entrances of the villages as a testimony to the prowess of the warriors of the tribe. I have seen these ghastly trophies in evidence.

Things seemed to be very quiet in the Chin Hills, when in the year 1892 a Burman Magistrate, travelling with a small military escort, was treacherously attacked and cruelly murdered. Most of his escort shared his fate, but a few fought their way out and reported what had happened to the Sirkar (government). With the least possible delay an expeditionary force was raised and sent up to the Chin Hills. There were cheery boys from the Norfolk Regiment, Gurkhas from various Burma battalions, their gallant little cousins from Garhwal, Pathans and Punjabis, a Pioneer Regiment from Madras, a company of the Queen's Own Sappers and Miners from the same Presidency, a Mountain Battery, and all the details that make up an expeditionary force. From many distant parts of India and Burma they had all converged on the Chin Hills and were ready for action, but unfortunately they were immobilised for want of transport and could do nothing until we arrived. By 'we' is meant the Cooly Corps of Gurkhas from

Nepal; for in the Chin country everything had, in those days, to be carried on the heads of mountaineers. The main roads were merely goat-tracks along the hillside, and even animals as sure-footed as mules were in constant danger of slipping down the *khud* (precipice) and being lost. I had only very recently arrived in India and was overjoyed at receiving the order to report myself at Madras for active service in Burma. The magnificent harbour since built on the shore of that town did not then exist, and together with a number of other details and troops for the expedition I was taken in a Masoolah-boat to the Trooper lying off-shore. These large barge-like boats consisted of planks sewed together by coco-nut fibre and rowed by banks of men with primitive oars. They leaked abominably and smelt worse, but we were soon safely on the Trooper and on our way to Rangoon. There I reported to the Commandant of the Cooly Corps who said that we were to have two or three days for the necessary shopping before we started. I was taken down and introduced to the headmen of the five or six hundred gallant little fellows who for the next six months were to be my special charge. Life seemed care-free and full of joyous expectation, but only for a few hours, for cholera cases appeared among the Gurkhas and we were hustled off into a camp some miles outside Rangoon and put under strict quarantine.

To add to our misfortunes the Monsoon broke. For the first time in my recollection, I saw tropical rain, and it *did* rain, by the bucketful, all day long out of a leaden sky. We two officers each had a small tent, and as the camp was badly chosen everything was under water. The men were dying on the wet ground. We sent violent messages, and straw came out for them to lie on, and big tents were raised over them. My C.O. knew far more about hill-men than I did and I saw the sense of his verdict: 'We must get these men moved; they are hill-men; they will die like flies in the plains in this rain and heat. Meanwhile, the expedition can't move without us. Can't you get the P.M.O. (Principal Medical Officer) to let us go? We shall be all right as soon as we get out of this.' The common sense of it appealed to me and I put it strongly to the P.M.O. only to be told that I was a junior officer whose opinion hadn't been asked and wasn't wanted. Thoroughly disheartened, I told my C.O. the result of my interview. He was a man of resource, and all he said was, 'You stay here and run this camp for a bit, I'm going into Rangoon.' Later he came out with a contented smile on his face, but vouchsafed no information. The sun had broken through, the rain had stopped

for a while, few fresh cholera cases had occurred and life seemed a little less drab, when I heard the hoof-beats of a pony cantering up the road toward the camp. We turned out to meet a very smart staff officer who asked my C.O. if he might have a talk with me in private, a request which was granted with suspicious alacrity. The officer came straight to the point. ‘Elliot, we are in the devil of a hole, the General wants your opinion. Ought the corps to be moved?’ I gave the obvious answer, ‘I am a junior officer, may I suggest that the General should ask the P.M.O. who already has my opinion?’ He stuck to his point. ‘The General wants to know what *you* think; you will kindly consider this an order.’ I replied, ‘I have told the P.M.O. that if we move we may drop two or three men on the way, and that if we stay here I believe this corps will be wiped out.’ He shook hands with me with a beaming smile on his face and that was the last I saw of him except that before leaving he spoke to my C.O. a word which at once started the camp into unexpected bustle.

Two hours later, a mounted orderly galloped up and handed in the message that we would entrain at 2 a.m. It was then about 6 p.m. The men sang as we marched into Rangoon. We were rushed through to Mandalay under quarantine and were loaded on to an Irrawaddy paddle-steamer, a huge flat-bottomed boat of the type that had made up ‘the great flotilla’ and that took all our five hundred odd men with a number of other details. It was just heaven to be on that steamer, with little or nothing to do but to sit in a deck-chair under an awning and look out on the passing panorama of Burma, the strange attractive people, all clothed in artistic shades of blues, pinks and other colours, the tropical foliage of a fertile country, the strange beasts and birds and the glorious sunshine. A comfortable cabin, good meals and immaculate stewards soon made one forget the horrors of cholera camp. We dropped two men on the way; that was all. The little Gurkhas who had been so depressed in the camp regained their usual gay spirits and were all smiles and chatter. As we passed through the villages that lined the bank they most unmercifully chaffed the Burmese girls and women who were neck-deep in the stream washing their clothes. The method of doing so appeared to be to go in deep enough, take off all their clothes, rub them between the hands and put them on again. Many of the Gurkhas knew a little Burmese, and the roars of laughter that greeted their sallies and the no less spirited replies of the girls in the water made it clear that the comments were Rabelaisian. We

went down the Irrawaddy to Myingyan and then turned up the Chindwin River to Kalewa, the base of the expedition. There we spent a few days getting to know the men, sorting them out into companies and so on ; and there too, we met with a strange experience : we sat in Court and heard a British officer being tried and acquitted on the charge of going off with a Burman's wife. To me the local point of view seemed an extraordinary one. If a Burman says to a woman, ' You shall be my wife,' and if two witnesses hear it, the marriage is recognised. If under similar conditions he says, ' The marriage is at an end,' divorced they are. All beautifully simple. The officer had said, ' You shall be my wife.' Had the Burman, possibly in a fit of anger, said, ' I have finished with you as a wife ? ' The Court decided he had, and whatever anybody thought of the morals of the procedure or the want of dignity of it, the law took its course, and that was that.

Next morning we were to start on our first march which was said to be about twenty miles, and we were to move off at 4 a.m. which we did. Never shall I forget that journey. We officers had got soft on the plains of India and were quite unused to carrying field-service equipment. The Gurkhas, accustomed to the mountains of Nepal, felt the lowland journey severely, and we had continually to look after them and keep them on the move. The road was a rough cart-track ; the day was swelteringly hot, and it was late in the afternoon when we got to our camping-place. A Forest officer with a Burmese wife took the pair of us in most hospitably, and I can confidently say that I have never enjoyed a cup of tea as much as I did the one she gave us. Their one-storeyed bungalow was built like all the houses in Burma, raised on wooden poles, and was beautifully shady and cool inside. For a hundred yards or more all round, the trees had been cleared away, and the officer told us that not infrequently he had shot deer from his own verandah and that on one occasion at least he had bagged a tiger from there.

Next day we marched into Kalemyo and came within sight of the fine range of Chin Hills. Here in England we should call them mountains, but in those parts, so near to the Himalayas, a mere elevation of 5,000 to 9,000 feet was thought little of. We had two days' rest at Kalemyo where I made my first acquaintance with the very delightful little ladies of Burma. It was known that strangers on their way to the front had arrived at the local Officers' Mess, and the daughters of the Chief Magistrate promptly came in to inspect us. Their English was as good as our Burmese so

we were confined to the language of smiles, helped out by chaff from more experienced officers who, as Tommy puts it, 'slung the bat,' i.e. talked the language—*bhāt* meaning language in Hindustani. Their manners were delightfully friendly, and the innocent way in which they reached their hands out, annexed one's cigarettes and appeared oblivious that they were doing so, was an education in itself. They greatly preferred English cigarettes or Indian cigars to their own rank, clumsy and badly rolled 'Burman cheroots.' Despite the fact that they had taken the initiative in coming to call upon us, it must not for a moment be supposed that their conduct was not the height of propriety. Such an idea would be a great mistake. They were merely following the customs of their country.

There was one comparatively senior officer in the station who was very fond of whisky and who appealed to me to tell him whether whisky did not sterilise dangerous soda-water. In a rash moment I ventured the questionable remark that if he wanted to sterilise the soda-water he would probably have to take it half and half. A long time afterwards I heard that he followed this prescription to the letter, always maintaining that he did it 'on the advice of that teetotal chap, Elliot.' It taught me to be careful in my statements.

After a few delightful days we crossed the plain and started our first climb up the Chin Hills. Being in an enemy country we had an armed escort. We stopped our first night half-way up the hill at No. 3 stockade, which, not very long before, had been disastrously rushed at night by the Chins. Another day's journey brought us to Fort White, the headquarters of the expedition, a very bare and exposed spot which, however, had the advantage of being much flatter than any of the surrounding country and so of presenting a suitable camping-site for the force that had been assembled for the expedition.

Our arrival at Fort White was the signal for an outburst of military activity, and the various villages that had been responsible for the murder of the Magistrate were attacked and destroyed in turn. The first of these was Monthök. We fell in in the early morning with frost on the ground, and feeling bitterly cold in spite of a ration of hot tea before starting. The column consisted of a few hundred fighting men with double the number of details. As soon as we had got away from the plateau on which Fort White was built we had to move in single file along what was little better than a goat-track. The

order was given for no talking and no smoking, and we strung out in a long serpentine line, certainly over a mile in length, winding in and out round the *nullahs* (little valleys) which seamed the hill-side. Each man put a handkerchief or some other white object through his belt behind so as to guide the next in the darkness. One of our officers suddenly lost sight of the man in front of him, who, unknown to him, had turned a sharp corner to the right ; hearing the tramp of feet quite close and straight ahead the officer stepped out boldly to his front and found himself rolling rapidly down the hillside. The column had doubled back round a narrow *nullah*, and the footsteps he had heard so near were really those of men some way ahead of him in the line and on the far side of the little valley. He was a good deal more startled than hurt and managed to pull up before long. A couple of little Gurkhas swung over the edge and helped him back in a way that only mountain-men can, and he took very good care after that to keep on the heels of the man in front of him. Day broke when we were still far from Monthök, and as we dropped lower and lower the heat increased ; the clothes which had seemed so scanty in the early hours at Fort White became suffocatingly hot. Men fell out suffering from heat, but the column pushed steadily on towards its goal, winding like a narrow snake through valleys in which large parts of it were completely hidden from view by the high crops and other tropical vegetation. I can remember looking down on one such valley and thinking what a chance it offered a bold, resolute enemy to ambush the column, cut a section of it to pieces and escape again before any effective action could possibly be taken by our leader. Luckily, the Chin had learnt respect for our arms and we got through without any trouble. As Medical Officer I was near the tail of the column, and darkness was falling before I reached camp. Already *chuppahs* (lean-to sheds made of branches of trees) had been constructed, the servants had got a kitchen together and preparation for dinner was well under way. I shall never forget that dinner. Out there in the jungle, far from anywhere, on a spot never before trodden by the foot of a white man, our Indian servants put us up a four-course dinner : soup, a bully-beef hash with some vegetables annexed whilst we were on the march, boiled rice and jam, cheese and biscuits. We had had next to nothing to eat since four o'clock that morning and we enjoyed our meal as much as anything the 'Ritz' could have turned out. Everyone was cheerful and happy and one saw the British officer at his very best. Before he had looked after himself at all he had

seen to his men's comforts, to the posting of guards and to everything else that was necessary ; and then came the inevitable remark, 'What about the sweep ?' I listened with astonishment. The number of officers was counted, each one's name was put on a bit of paper and dropped into a hat. As the names were drawn out the list was made and two minutes allotted to each. Then we sat down to dinner and the sitting down was taken as zero hour. The first man had his two minutes and so on with each in turn. Our improvised Mess was lit by hurricane lanterns and it was a certainty that we would be fired on sooner or later from the hills around ; the lucky fellow in whose two minutes the first shot was fired scooped the pool. This was the routine custom. Fortunately, the Chins were bad shots, and as they had to fire from a distance, owing to our screen of sentries, our danger was very small, whereas a prompt reply fire evidently sent them scurrying. It was a very different business in the North-West Frontier expeditions where the native marksmen were good and the rifles modern. A friend of mine was sitting at dinner during one such expedition, with his back against a bank, when it was noticed that he was very silent. 'A clean round hole in his forehead' explained that. No one knew he had been hit.

The Chin houses were made of enormous slabs of teak, a huge tree was felled, adzed down on each side and cut into lengths to make the sides and ends of the building. They were waterproof and sunproof, but none of us ventured inside them ; we knew the dirty habits of the Chins too well for that. Water had been carried down from a long distance to the village by aqueducts constructed by a succession of young trees laid end to end after cutting grooves along their length. These pipes brought the water down most effectually, and the destruction of this irrigation system was part of the punishment of the villagers. Notches were cut at intervals in the sides of the pipes, making them quite useless for the future, and the order was then given to burn the village. I shall never forget the sight of those huge blazing teak beams. That it annoyed the owners was quite obvious from the rattle of fire that came down on us from the hills all round, without, however, inflicting any serious casualties. But our job was only half-finished ; spies had brought in word that the old village of Monthök we were now occupying had, as a precaution against action on our part, been practically discarded for a new one a few miles away. Thither one bright morning we marched to find a beautiful new townlet which had been built to take the place of the old one. The houses

were finely thatched and were as clean as new pins, inside and out. I should guess there were a hundred or more of them. An order was given and in a few minutes such a bonfire went up as I have never seen, before or since. In the old town the lighting of the teak slabs had been a work of art ; here, we just put matches to the thatch which was a foot or more in thickness. Up till that moment there had been silence, but the sight of the flames infuriated the Chins who were really not many hundred yards away in the surrounding jungle that clothed the hillsides, and in a few minutes they started a fusillade from every point of the compass, until the bushes fairly spurted with flame. Our leaders were prepared for this and our scouts thrown out all round us returned the fire with such effect that quiet soon fell on the scene. Our casualties were *nil* ; I fear that we had thoroughly enjoyed our outing and we certainly had underlined the lesson that the Sirkar will not tolerate the gratuitous murder of its servants whilst on their lawful occasions. We marched back to Fort White by stages, and the angry villagers followed us at a distance on the other side of the valley making disrespectful remarks about the virtue of our female ancestors to the entertainment of our guide and interpreter who was quite pleased to translate these compliments literally for our benefit.

The Laibohn column came next. The same long weary marches and the same effort to catch by surprise an enemy who knew every foot of the hills and whose spies dogged the column from the moment it left Fort White onward. This column was not, however, without incident. Laibohn lay in a valley commanded by a spur on the far side. As we stood on the crest of the hill against the skyline the bullets of a ragged volley swept past us. Not one of the old-timers even ducked, and the Colonel, an expert in frontier warfare, paused in lighting a cigarette to make the remark, ‘Clear that ridge, Captain ——.’ There was no room for formal deployment and the next moment some fifty or sixty young Gurkhas were tearing down one hillside and up the other. We were too late to see anything of the Chins except the smoke of a last ragged volley from the jungle at the crest of the hill, just before we got there ; they faded away as if by magic, taking advantage of every scrap of cover and of the fact that their own colour contrasted but little with the surrounding dirt and so effectually helped to hide them from view. Our main body stood on the top of the hill whilst a few skirmishers sprayed out into the brushwood, and the exciting moment was over almost as soon as it had begun.

Night fell and it was decided that a small party should creep into the village in the early hours in the hopes of ambushing any of the enemy who had come back to look for their effects. The force lay about a mile from the village. We fell in at midnight and the officer in command of the troops led the column. Naturally I walked along with him, and as I did so I reflected that probably every step we took was watched and that suddenly a volley from the jungle on ahead would prove it. However, nothing happened and we crept quietly in and took up positions in the silence and darkness, no one speaking a word. Far across the valley came the wail of a fretful child, chased from its home by the exigencies of frontier warfare. That plaintive cry, repeated at intervals all night long, is my saddest memory of the whole Chin Hill expedition. It was cruel that the poor little mite should be dragged into the net of the evil-doing of others. Suddenly the silence was broken by a pandemonium of noise from where the men were quartered. We jumped to our feet and rushed to the spot to find the cause of the disturbance: some of the little Garhwalis had discovered a number of chickens roosting on the hot embers of a house that had been burnt down in the afternoon. Doubtless the warmth was very grateful to the chilled birds. The little soldiers thought that to capture them would add a very pleasant item to their curry pots without anyone being the wiser. Unfortunately, the Chin chicken was a very wideawake bird and told everybody about it. The officer in command made some most unpleasant remarks to the *subadar* who handed them on to the delinquents, and we took our way back to camp as it was obviously useless to pretend to ourselves that our presence was not now known to the whole country-side.

Next day we were patrolling the surrounding country and in the course of doing so were engaged in clearing a small hill. Before we started I was solemnly placed by the *subadar* (native captain) in charge of two gallant little Gurkhas, with the express order that I was to be guarded with the greatest care and never to be left for a moment. I felt like a piece of the very best china being packed for the post. Have you ever tried to climb a hill whose sides are of shale, with a tropical sun beating down on your back and head, with dust flying all round you, with a crowd of sportsmen (luckily very badly armed) trying to pick you off as you did it, and with the natural aim on your part to make a record of the performance? I slipped and grunted and toiled and sweated upwards, with most valuable help from my two little friends, who

being mountain-men seemed equally at home on a steep slope or on the level. We spotted a man hit near us and made over to him. Whilst I did a first-aid dressing our friends from above paid the stationary target a good deal of attention, and noticing this my pair of protectors insisted on standing up between me and my charge on the one hand and the enemy on the other. When I told them in my best, and very bad Hindustani to lie down, they grinned broadly and explained that it was 'Subadar ka hookum,' or the *subadar's* order. It was no use arguing; they just grinned, stood there and fired casually in the direction of our unfriendly Chins. We got to the top, did our job whatever it was, and started down again, when a fresh burst of firing was heard and word came down of three casualties. Up that awful hill we went again, all in the dust and heat, and there we found them; they certainly looked bad enough; one was shot in the abdomen, a second had his whole face streaming with blood, I forget the third. A first dressing sufficed for the time being for number one. Then we set to work on the second, a little *havildar* (sergeant), who looked to be very severely injured. To my astonishment I found he had not a single wound even skin-deep; the soft leaden Chin bullet had struck the barrel of his rifle as he had charged full at his man, head down and bayonet fixed, and had burst in a fine spray of lead which had passed like a hurricane through his scalp. Greatly relieved, I told the little *havildar* that he had sustained no more damage than his wife could have done with her nails if he had made her jealous. His comrades shouted with laughter and he sat up with a sheepish grin whilst I bandaged his sorely scratched scalp. This time we got down safely with our wounded. I explained to the C.O. that I wanted to have a look at the abdominal case at once, and he said the column would halt for twenty-four hours if necessary. An operation-table was built of branches, and a hospital assistant gave the anaesthetic whilst a sporting subaltern helped me. It was very different from surgery as I had recently known it in a first-class English County Hospital with every convenience to hand, but it was the best we could do. To my intense relief I found the bullet, which had entered in front in the middle of the abdomen and come out near the spine, had merely run round the muscle-layers and never gone through the abdomen at all. In a few minutes I had a dressing on, and made my report to the great relief of the C.O. of the column.

It was a lovely morning as we marched out of Laibohn and started for our headquarters. Up and up we climbed through

verdant tropical vegetation. All nature seemed at peace, but those of us who had got to know the Chin did not in this respect include him with nature. At every halt we looked for something to hide behind, something to put between the slope of the hill below us and our own vulnerable bodies. The only exception to this rule was the behaviour of the Tommies. It was their first 'column,' and they plainly held the Chin very cheap. I ventured to suggest to one of their officers that they were asking for trouble. He was a fine sportsman, but he knew as little of the country and of its ways as his men did; his direction to 'take cover when you halt, men' was casual and quite unbacked by example. Suddenly firing broke out in the front of the column, and, being the only M.O. with it, I hurried up to see if anyone was hurt. I had not gone far before word came through that several of the Norfolks were wounded and back I hurried. One man had a piece cut out of his chin just below the lower lip as neatly as if it had been done with a cheese-scoop, and a very sharp one at that, and was bleeding freely; another, a truly astonished sergeant, had had a bullet pass between his arm and his side, cut the strap of his water-bottle and drop it to the ground. There was not a single serious casualty, and as I dressed the wounds I took the opportunity to say how very close up in the jungle the enemy came to the column and how necessary it was to take all the cover one could. I remarked that for want of better protection I would hide behind a blade of grass, rather than give them an open shot at me. From that day on the Norfolk lads were as good skirmishers and as clever at 'taking cover' as any of our more seasoned troops. They were as quick to learn as they were cheery and gallant, and that is saying a lot. Next day we marched into Fort White carrying the wounded *havildar* in a canvas stretcher and shortly afterwards the Commandant of the Garhwalis told me his men had formally applied that whenever they went under fire the doctor who had healed their comrade who had been shot through the abdomen should accompany them, as they would then have no fear. I was a mascot and had earned a great reputation very cheaply. The sequel was amusing. The P.M.O. had me up next morning and told me that I had been most unwise to imperil the safety of a column by delaying it in an enemy's country for the life of a single man. I was never to do such a thing again. The ways of the Army seemed strange to me, but obviously no reply was open to me except, 'Very well, sir!' with a strong, if insubordinate mental reservation as to 'next time.'

Meantime, news of the expedition had been filtering through India and Burma, and every head of a military department who wanted to collect an extra clasp decided it was most important in the interests of the State that he should make a first-hand examination of the situation on the spot. As soon as word had gone round of the proposed considerable increase in our numbers the Commissioner had arranged for an addition of three or four hundred men to the Cooly Corps, for the five hundred we had would not have sufficed for the transport of the big column in prospect. These men were added to my medical charge and the C.O. notified me that they were coming in and that I was to go up with him to meet them. Never have I seen such a wild set of savages. They were Kukais from the hills to the north of us, hill-men used to carrying heavy loads over the mountains. Each one had been provided with a government blanket and with that sole exception they were stark-naked. They came into headquarters at a jog-trot, singing a weird sort of chant and making a jingle with staves crowned with small crude cymbals. So far as I was concerned they proved a very light charge, as they refused to come near hospital when they were sick and so were run entirely by their own headmen ; they were excellent workers and gave no trouble.

The Commander-in-Chief arrived with a brilliant staff. Rumour in Fort White had it that he had not yet had an opportunity of adding the Frontier medal to his row. Brass-hats of all kinds rolled in till the scanty accommodation of Fort White was strained to the utmost. We slept as thick as bees. All arrangements were being pushed forward for a punitive expedition to the outlying village of Captial on the far side of the river of the same name. It was very much the largest column that had ever moved out of Fort White and it wound for miles along the hillsides. On a cold morning at the close of the year we moved off, long before the break of day, and climbed up from Fort White to Kennedy Peak, over 9,000 feet up, and bitterly cold until the warm tropical sun came to our rescue. Then down, down, down, right into the valley through which flows the Captial River. There was very little shelter and we marched all day long. I was horrified to see the troops drinking from muddy pools by the roadside, but they were so thirsty that no one could stop them. We lay down each night just as we were, under rough *chuppah* shelters, not even taking our boots off. Three nights of this elicited a most amusing remark from a cheery Norfolk Tommy, overheard from a *chuppah* near ours. ‘Talk about strong, s’trewth, when I get my boots off

I shall be the strongest man in this regiment.' It was characteristic of the magnificent spirit in which these youngsters met all the inconveniences and hardships of mountain warfare. I never heard a grumble from them, even when ill or wounded. The third night we came to the Capital River, the passage of which we expected to find disputed. It was a very swift-flowing stream, curling about with many back eddies, and if I remember rightly, about eighty yards across. I do not believe it had ever been reconnoitred, for no small force would have been safe in that country. A consultation was held and it was decided to build a raft and to tow it backward and forward from bank to bank. Unfortunately, the only wood available was green, and sank so low in the water that it had quite insufficient carrying power for so large an expedition. Moreover, in cutting down one of the trees the arrangements were so unskilled that it swung round and crushed the foot of one of the little Gurkhas. I sent up word to my senior officer in the camp above and made all preparations for the necessary operation. Word came down to me to go ahead, and I was on the point of doing so when a shadow fell across the operation area. Without looking round I said, 'Would you kindly get out of my light?' when to my horror I recognised the Commander-in-Chief's voice, 'I'm awfully sorry, Elliot.' Without stopping what I was doing I apologised sincerely, but he insisted that the apology was due from him, and stood interestedly watching me at work. That night I stayed down at the river-edge to be near my patient. Luckily, we were behind a strong stone wall that had been put up to protect us. From time to time we could hear the smack of bullets against it, a polite attention from the other side of the river; whilst at regular intervals came the shrill whine of a Snyder. Fortunately it evidently took the sportsman who owned it some time to reload this weapon, or else he was economising in ammunition. Infrequent as it was, it was a most disconcerting sound; also luckily he never hit the wall. The way in which we got across that river was rather extraordinary. I never heard the full facts, but it was said that an Engineer sergeant at Fort White had long been thinking out the problem, and with some difficulty had persuaded the authorities to allow him to bring on the column a number of old empty kerosene-oil tins with a framework contraption of his own invention. On this was screwed a platform of hollow bamboos which formed a quite serviceable raft and carried a good number of men as well as the screw-guns and other impedimenta. An officer tried to swim the river with a rope; he failed

and was nearly drowned, but some of his men took on the task and got over safely. We were all day crossing, but as soon as the first troops were over they cleared the hillside and the firing into camp ceased. There was one occupation which to us youngsters seemed sufficiently amusing. Bored stiff by inaction and waiting we whiled away some of the long hours by borrowing rifles from the troops and taking pot-shots at anything that moved on the opposite hillside. For the purpose we lay on our stomachs on the edge of the hill on which the main camp was pitched. The Chief of the Staff had been down to the river to inspect, and was coming up to report to the Commander-in-Chief. As he got toward the top of the path he became aware of rifles being fired just over his head and he seemed distinctly annoyed. He most unkindly referred to us as a 'set of damned amateurs.' Once across the river, we were soon in Capital, a very large and important village, and the imposing display of force, such as probably had never been seen in those hills before, had a very quietening effect on the whole area. Our return journey was accomplished with comparatively little incident, except that coming fresh from the hot plains below, we had to cross Kennedy Peak, 9,000 feet up, in a snowstorm. For some reason which I have forgotten we were halted there long enough to get bitterly cold and we got a very welcome drink at the hospitable Mess of the 21st Madras Pioneers, a regiment to which I had been attached on my first arrival in India. It was characteristic of the happy condition of those days that the regimental bandmaster, recognising me as we passed, started 'Auld Lang Syne' on the band, which was playing to cheer the column. His broad smile and his salute left no doubt as to the personal application of the tune.

It was on this column that I saw the guns of a Mountain Battery in action; they were then comparatively new and we had heard all sorts of rumours of them and of the wonderful things they did. I was in the middle of the column, foot-slogging along a goat-track and talking to the officer in command of the screw-guns when we found that there had been a halt called ahead. On a small plateau the General with his Staff was in conversation with the Political Officer-in-charge of the Chin Hills. As we came up the General called up the Gunner Officer and said, 'Captain —, I want you to drop a few shells on that village; it has been giving a lot of trouble and we have no time to go down there.' It was like a transformation scene at a theatre; a few sharp orders and all was changed; the mules carrying various parts of the guns were trotted

smartly into position and wheels, limbers, parts of the gun, ammunition, etc., were rapidly unloaded and fitted together ; a quick sight and the command to 'fire' ; shell after shell soared on its way and fell right in the middle of the village, sending up cascades of earth with fragments of houses, etc., into the air. The village had been evacuated long before our arrival in the neighbourhood, but as the boys say, ' That larned them all right ' ; it was a poor game provoking a power that could strike with deadly effect from a distance of 3,000 yards or more. In a few minutes the guns were again unscrewed and loaded up, and the mules were on the march again ; it took little more time than the telling of the story ; there was no bustle, no confusion, no hurry, but just a marvellous exhibition of discipline worthy of the Military Tournament at its best. I mentally took off my hat to the British officer and especially to the man who wears the bursting shells as his regimental badge. His cool efficiency was only beaten by the just-in-a-day's-work air with which he did it all, backed to the last ounce by his men and by the methodical mules.

Six months had passed and the Chins were getting thoroughly tired of being harried by columns and of the attentions of the small garrisons which had been posted at various centres in the district. They came, sued for peace and brought in the tale of guns, etc., demanded by the Commissioner. We now really saw them properly for the first time, for the most we had been vouchsafed up till then had been the flicker of a movement from rock to rock or in the dense jungle far away. The first thing that struck one about them was their dirtiness. I do not think they can ever have washed, and they smelt so abominably that one could detect them by one's nose alone twenty or thirty yards away on a road. They were a fine, athletic, upstanding people and wore very little clothing. The women sported a simple petticoat as their principal garment ; it consisted of a rope tied round the loins and bearing a thick fringe of ends of string which hung down half-way to the knees and which at least provided for the minimum of decency. In addition, they usually had a ragged blanket over their shoulders. They were evidently the beasts of burden, and mighty good ones too. I saw an immature girl arrive in Fort White after a climb of 3,000 to 4,000 feet and a walk of six or seven miles carrying a forty-pound load on her head. She went off again smiling with a fresh and equal burden for the return journey, and was much entertained when the interpreter explained to her that I was

astonished she was able to do it. Her facial comment was evidently best translatable as 'The poor mutt.'

The method of carrying a load is curious. Over the shoulders fits a yoke hollowed out for the neck and perforated at each end by a hole through which passes a length of rope. These ropes meet in a broad plaited grass band which rests on the forehead. The other ends of the rope are tied round the burden, and most of the weight is thus thrown on the head, neck and back. For hill work it is a most effective arrangement and is suggestive of the old English way of carrying milk-pails on a shoulder-yoke.

The men were armed with old guns of an ancient flint-lock pattern, originally imported from England and known as 'Tower guns.' They used to train these on a spot on a jungle-path along which a column was expected to come, fixing them beforehand on rests made out of cut branches. As the advance-guard appeared they would fire these guns all together, probably bringing down several men at the head of the force. Their ammunition was miscellaneous, from moulded bullets to 'a slug that is hammered from telegraph-wire,' or even to a mixture of nails and stones. The wounds they made at close quarters were terrible. The British reply to this form of warfare was to throw out a screen of flankers in the jungle on each side of the main column's line of advance. It was astonishing to see the pace the little Gurkhas and Garhwalis moved through the brushwood, enabling the column to proceed at quite a fair pace on an open path. The Chins did not like our new method of warfare because they were apt to be cut off and caught by the flankers. This made them very jumpy and cautious, and added greatly to the safety of the troops. The roll of the skin-covered war-drums could be heard from a great distance when we were on the march, carrying messages as to our numbers, direction and intentions. There hangs in my hall to-day the Chief of Laibohn's flint-lock gun and his war-drum. Another curio I have kept all these years is a mahogany-stained gourd, given me by the Commissioner, who explained to me its purpose: the Chin women chew tobacco and spit out the product into these little flasks for their lords to carry. When a Chin wishes to pay you a great compliment he offers you a drink from this flask. The Commissioner assured me that he had accepted this courtesy more than once. A hero indeed!

My own experience with the Chins was quite a happy one. The Commissioner conceived the idea that it would go far to propitiate them and to put an end to all the ill-feeling aroused by the expedi-

tion if we could extend to them the benefits of Western surgery. He asked me if I would act as an honorary civil surgeon for the time being, a request to which I gladly consented. It was all quite simple, straightforward surgery, but its effect on the Chin mind was prodigious. One man had come in with a suppurating wound in his thigh near the knee, the result of a bullet-injury received in action against us some years previously. He was put under chloroform and a big piece of dead bone was easily removed. To a surgeon it was a very simple procedure, but to the patient and to his friends who witnessed it, it was 'White Man's Magic' of the highest order. When they went back to his village with the leg healed, the story lost nothing in the telling: 'There was a wonderful white man who had *killed him for half an hour*, had cut a deep hole in his leg without the dead man knowing anything about it, had then given the magic order that he was to come back to life, and had finally presented him with the dead piece of bone which had bewitched him for all those years.'

The hot weather was approaching. The gilded Staff had departed and the Force which had been gathered from all over India and Burma was finding its way back again scattering in a thousand directions. The Kukais had jingled out of camp and the Darjeeling Cooly Corps was one of the last units to leave. We had done the job we had been sent to do and were no longer needed. Our men were in high spirits, having earned big wages, and their chaff of the girls as we steamed down the river was more boisterous than ever. We passed through Rangoon to Calcutta and disbanded them at Darjeeling. In the retrospect that cold weather was full of happy memories. As one looked back on it one forgot the burning sun, the goat-paths across the mountains, the cold, the casualties, the hardships and the want of sleep, and only remembered it all as a joyous picnic, full of new experiences and of interest. What it cost the Government of India I would not venture to say. Luckily, the casualties were comparatively few, for the Chins had learnt the danger of standing to resist British attacks, and their method of warfare consisted in ambushing us in the jungle and disappearing before reprisals could be effectually undertaken. One looks back on it all and reflects that a squadron of the Royal Air Force could have done the whole of that job in a few days, at a minimum of inconvenience to both sides. The bombing of one or two villages, after notice to evacuate them had been given, would have had far more effect than all those long, weary and expensive columns. Times are changed indeed.

*WINGED VICTORY, HYDE PARK CORNER.*

You seem immortal on your height,  
And we but paltry passing things,  
Transient and fleeting, puny ghosts  
Beneath your wide, victorious wings.

And yet, a million years from now  
Deep in a lonely ocean bed  
Weeds of the sea may cover you,  
And creep about your hidden head :

Among the secrets of the sea  
Your mighty arch may fall and rot  
And whiter horses break, above  
The horses of your chariot.

Some herd among the undergrowth  
May stumble on your widespread wings,  
And wonder whence and what they are,  
Those fallen and forgotten things :

Or Time may cover you in earth,  
Above you grass and saplings grow,  
And strange new races go their ways  
Unheeding that you lie below.

All unassailable you seem  
Above our small obscurity :  
Yet the long years shall conquer you,  
While we ?—We are Eternity.

LEONORA STARR.

## CORN.

BY F. H. DORSET.

THE front entrance of Number Five Cherry Road always reminded Janet Harley of a rabbit-hole. So did the other front entrances in Cherry Road, for all alike were entered through a round up-ended horse-shoe of masonry in the form of a small porch, within the shade of which lurked the front door itself. You dived into darkness from the outer world, and if you happened to be, like Janet, a Cherry Road householder, you produced a latch-key and let yourself in to the hidden mystery of your shadowed burrow. At least, that was how things happened when the sunshine was off the fronts of the houses, and in the case of the left side of Cherry Road, as you came to it from the main street, that always happened quite early in the afternoon, even in August.

Janet halted at the little front gate and glanced up and down the respectable suburban road disgustedly.

There had been a time, not so very far distant, when she had even found Cherry Road exciting and Number Five an adventure. Those days were over. Like the paint in the living-room, which courtesy called the dining-room, the feet of time, of five short years, had worn and kicked away their pristine beauty. Lewis seemed to like the paint that way, just as he already preferred, at thirty-five, suits that were comfortably worn, pipes verging on foulness, and an unvarying cycle of tulips, lobelia, and geranium in the front garden. Regarded in the clear light of a summer afternoon these things seemed a little shocking to Janet's critical eyes, typical of that lack of ambition which prefers comfort to experiment. People, especially men, ought not to feel like that at thirty-five. And moneyless women with ambition ought not to marry men who felt like that. This, thought Janet, was what came of marrying too young, she at twenty, Lewis at twenty-four.

She walked up the front path slowly, reluctantly leaving the sunshine at the gate for the shadow of the house across the little garden, although the day was very hot. Cherry Road simmered and slept. The hour was yet too early for returning business-men and school children. John and Peggy were going straight to tea

with a friend from school and would not be home till supper-time ; Lewis would not be back from the City until six ; the ' daily ' had gone home as usual at two o'clock. Number Five for the time being would be very quiet, and she, Janet, alone in it. She was not quite sure whether the prospect pleased her or not.

She stepped into the darkened porch, found her latch-key, inserted it in the lock, and after turning it gave the front door the sharp push which its slightly warped wood required before it would open. Within, the narrow hall-passage welcomed her with familiar uninspiring shabbiness. On her left stood the umbrella-stand-coat-rack combination, loaded in spite of her protests with a jumbled assortment of caps and coats. A discarded school-cap of John's, retained for rainy weather, had fallen to the floor, and Janet picked it up and dusted it mechanically. John had been five years old when they removed from the inconvenient flat at Battersea out to this little new house at Sparrowfield, and Peggy had been nearly two. Now they were ten and seven, and both growing a little out of hand. Lewis left the inculcation of discipline mostly to her but really, when a boy was nine years old . . . Lewis was in some respects almost a throw-back to Victorianism. He regarded Man as the bread-winner, Woman as the housekeeper, but he had not the Victorian parent's capacity for instilling obedience. A little of that quality might have been helpful ; that and a little less contentment with things as they were. Janet hung up the cap with a brisk irritable gesture and proceeded upstairs to remove her own hat.

She regarded the hat critically in her mirror before taking it off. It was new, rather daring, and of a shape which Lewis did not approve. That, in the perverse mood which had now possessed her for weeks, was one reason why she had bought it. But it wasn't really becoming, at present. 'I'll have to do my hair differently,' she mused, slowly removing the headpiece and dropping it on to the bed, 'and then it'll look all right. What a boon it would be if one could change one's hair, one's hat and one's husband all together every now and then !'

The little burst of alliteration amused her, and she smiled faintly. She stood for a few minutes beside her dressing-table, looking down through the small bay-window into the back garden of Number Five and over many other back gardens to right and left and at the foot of their own.

Most of the male inhabitants of Cherry Road were clerks or

shop-keepers or minor Civil Servants, but one and all seemed to be ardent gardeners. The little gardens inclined to run to a pattern ; so much of miniature kitchen-garden semi-concealed beyond lattice-wood covered with rambler roses or the more practical loganberry, so much of lawn, so many standard rose-trees, bedding-plants, bird-baths and what not ; potting-sheds and amateur glass-houses constructed as lean-tos against house-sides or the close oak paling which divided garden from garden. Smug little gardens these, but they represented a good deal of effort and toil before they had blossomed out of cornfields laid desolate by builders' waste. Ten years ago, so Mrs. Smith at 'Palmdene' had told Janet, most of this part of Sparrowfield had been under corn. Cherry Road had marked the end of a large cherry-orchard, and Sparrowfield Farm, still represented by an old house standing amid a few remaining elms, had held the lease of all. Lewis's own people on his mother's side had come from hereabouts, which was partly why he had selected Sparrowfield when promotion in the office made possible the hire-purchase of a villa. Having attained to the amenities of lesser Suburbia and a garden which could be run on perfectly conventional lines Lewis's ambition appeared to have expired. He would be perfectly content, mused his wife, to divide his time between the Ministry of Pensions where he worked and this suburb of Sparrowfield until due himself to retire as a pensioned Civil Servant. Then he would be perfectly contented with Sparrowfield only, and an annual holiday to some English watering-place. Wild horses would never make him travel abroad. And this was the year of Grace nineteen thirty-three. Really the thing seemed impossible ! Why, even the Trefords next door thought nothing of running over to France or Belgium for a cheap holiday !

Janet rubbed her nose thoughtfully and continued to stare down at the lozenge-shaped back gardens and solid oak palings below her. After all, you *couldn't* be very original with a lozenge. But you might vary the sequence of your annuals and even perennials. Now the day before yesterday, on Sunday evening, when she herself panted for a spot of country in the two-seater which usually contrived to hold four and a hamper, Lewis had insisted on remaining at home and potting out geraniums. And quite suddenly she had found herself making remarks to him about slaves of habit and the desirability of variation and experiment. They had been edged and eloquent remarks—put with a force which surprised herself—and they had goaded Lewis into a remark in return which was,

for him, also edged and eloquent, because he had an odd unmodern aversion to using certain swear-words before ladies or even his wife ; words which quite an aristocratic-looking girl had used freely to him recently, in a traffic-block, concerning his manner of driving a car. Of course it was *her* fault, really. But Lewis had just sat there with red ears, looking straight in front of him. Still, over the potted geraniums on Sunday, he had almost let himself go. First he had said 'Blast !' And then he had said, 'If you wanted to marry a ruddy pioneer why did you marry a ruddy Civil Servant ?' And then he had gone into the greenhouse, and slammed the door to the great peril of a loose pane of glass.

These things Janet cogitated over with one half of her mind, while the other half debated whether it was really worth while trying to make oneself look like a Leo Dowd drawing if you were not quite slim enough for the Leo Dowd type and had to do so much of your own housework. That hat, for instance. . . . But the Sparrowfield type was just dreadful, most of the time. One had to make an effort in some direction or be submerged, more especially if you were married to Lewis.

From where on earth did Lewis derive that unimaginative pig-headed routine strain which appeared to dominate him now ? Not from his mother, surely, that dark-eyed vivacious little widow, who at fifty-odd had suddenly re-married, choosing a widower from Canada, and had gone out gaily to a ranch in Alberta, whence she contrived to write amusing letters still full of the love of life. Lewis's father had died years ago, but his photograph suggested that he was interesting and anyhow he had been an actor. Lewis had largely been raised in theatrical lodgings and an atmosphere of financial instability. Perhaps that was why he disliked the theatre and adored certainties. But still . . . no, that didn't quite account for it. Physically he didn't look like the rabbit kind which went to earth nightly in Cherry Road. He had not the appearance of a clerk or a lesser business-man. Strap-hanging even, in an overcrowded train, he looked large and purposeful and oddly like a chained pioneer. Yet he wasn't even the head of a department and he wouldn't even experiment in his own garden. 'Not that I really care much about gardening,' thought Janet, 'but it's kind of symbolic, when you come to think of it.' She herself, brought up in a provincial town on small means, had, at twenty, suspected a Viking in Lewis and read Romance into the Civil Service. These illusions still died hard. She looked at the

neat bright blue edge to the well-weeded border on the left of the lawn, and said 'Damn lobelias !' with abrupt fervency.

The lobelias, however, remained undamned, and Janet gave her hair a last quick smooth and went downstairs for a solitary cup of tea.

The small kitchen was very quiet and neat, but everything in it looked a little worn and stale to-day. Janet sniffed at the sink, and decided that Lewis would have to make one of his slow, competent, troublesome overhaulings of the trap and drain outside. She put the kettle on the gas-stove and decided to sit in the back sitting-room until it boiled. That room at any rate had been repapered and painted recently and fresh covers had been made for the chairs and couch. Through its french windows one could look at the lawn and those damned lobelias, and even that was better than the company of a kitchen sink down which Mrs. Daily persistently emptied cabbage-water. Janet closed the kitchen door behind her, stepped forward a few paces, opened the sitting-room door, and entered the cornfield.

It was a large field, and already half of it had been reaped. Janet's feet rested on stubble and she looked up a gently-rising slope peppered with heaps of 'stooked' corn-sheaves to a treble line of figures moving with the implacable tranquillity of automatons. Farthest off, working steadily toward the ridge, moved men with scythes, behind them others who picked up and bound the corn into sheaves, and behind these women who set the sheaves in stooks. Over all a warm still sunlight poured drenchingly, and a scent of hot stubble and hedgerow assailed the nostrils.

Janet puckered her eyelids and stared across the field intently. A fleeting sensation of bewilderment brushed past her, but was gone almost before it touched her, although her hand which had just rested upon a sitting-room door-knob lingered now on the latch of a small side-gate. All was familiar. She had walked out here from Sparrowfield Town with a definite purpose, and she meant to go through with it in spite of the quite painful humming of her perturbed heart. She had come here with a message and an ultimatum for Lewis Brown, and both should be delivered. She had sent word yesterday by the carrier that she would come, and he must be expecting her, yet there he was, binding up his sheaves with his men, as calm as though she did not exist. Never mind ! Presently she would shake up that calmness of his good and proper !

She released the latch and stood leaning a little against the gate. Starched muslin skirts sprigged with a brown pattern of sea-weed billowed smartly from her neat waist. The white Indian shawl drawn trimly over her shoulders and pinned in front with a coral brooch was silk, and she remembered that she had that morning put fresh blue ribbons to the bonnet whose wide brim shaded her face from the brilliant sunshine. In short, all her Sunday war-paint, the warpaint of a reasonably prosperous suburban linen-draper's daughter, had been donned for this week-day occasion. She was looking her best and her most sophisticated, intentionally at once desirable and remote. If Lewis really wanted her surely she could make him capitulate to her wishes to-day ! But if he was so absorbed in his old harvest that he couldn't keep a look out for her after her message, then she'd go away in another minute or two, and call the banns off that were to go up for the first time on Sunday. 'I'm not going to be put second to a cornfield, I'm not !' she remarked, half-aloud.

A tall male figure which worked among the binders paused in its labour, straightened its back, and looked down to the gate. Then it summoned a brawny-armed woman from amid the 'stookers,' handed over its task to her, and began to walk towards Janet with quiet unhurrying strides. Instinctively Janet lifted her chin a trifle and pushed aside a tickling brown curl of her hair with nervous fingers.

This young man approached her, grinning possessively.

'So here you are at last !' he said. 'You're not over punctual, are you ?'

'I said I'd be here round about three o'clock,' replied Janet. 'I didn't say t'other-or-which side of three.'

'No more you did. Well, give us a kiss, now you have come !'

She backed closer to the gate, warding him off, and eyed him critically. He wore the corduroy breeches of a farmer, tied below the knee, without leggings ; long stout grey hose, dusty square-toed boots ; a blue shirt, open at the neck, with sleeves rolled almost to the shoulder off brown strenuous arms. His face was red, dusty, and hot beneath a fair golden stubble not unlike the corn-stubble beneath his feet. Lewis, busy harvesting, had forgotten to shave. Janet shook her head resolutely.

'You're a muck of dust and sweat,' she said, 'and you expect me to kiss you afore you've cleaned yourself ! And what have you done with your razor ? Been using it for shaving the pigs ?'

He rubbed a sheepish hand across his chin but grinned impishly.

'It grows fast, don't it?' he remarked, 'but there, I'll shave up come tea-time. Reckon, Janey, you know how busy I've been and all that this harvest means to you and me. Corn's up, and this field's half-shares mine, like the rest of the farm.'

'Now that's what I've really come over to talk to you about, Lew,' said Janet. 'I've got a bit of good news for you and I hope you'll take it serious and not say No to it. There's a fine chance for you to do something better than farming. You're not set heart and soul on the farming, are you, Lewis?'

He rested a large hand on the top of the gate-post and regarded her seriously, his grin dissolving into gravity. 'How d'you mean?' he asked, 'something better than farming!'

She turned round a little, and with conscious coyness traced the line of a blue vein in his brown arm with a delicate finger-tip.

'Lewis,' she said, 'I don't like you always smelling of the farm, always having to be just a working farmer. You're an all-round clean fellow yourself, and I'm truly fond of you, I am, but I do hate mucky farm-yards, and cold mornings when work begins at five in the dark and cold for a working farmer's wife. And you've got education. When you're dressed decent and all shaved and brushed Sundays you're a gentleman, Lewis. You're too good to be wasting your opportunities here.'

A dull flush mounted to the young man's brow.

'Who says I'm wasting my opportunities?' he asked indignantly. 'Haven't Steve and me pulled the place together since Dad died and made it pay? New Farm's out of debt now. Haven't I turned the education my father got for me to the best account for the land? You know I have, Janey!'

'Well,' conceded Janet, 'I don't mean that up till now you've wasted your education, Lew. No doubt you've done as your father wished. But now's your time to go further and do better. I've come over quiet-like to tell you about my Uncle Tillson.'

'Him that has the wholesale corn business up in London? What about him?'

'D'you remember how he came over here with my father and mother the day you and me had our tokening-tea? He took a fancy to you, Lew, and you showed him the new way you were keeping the farm-books and had put all the accounts ship-shape for Steve. And you and him, you kept on talking corn and

cornland and Mr. Cobden till I was fair sick with the pair of you.'

'Ay,' said Lewis laconically.

'Well, he's took with you, as I said, and he's terrible fond of me, having no children of his own, and having married father's sister and all.'

'That's good hearing.'

'Him and father and me, we've had a talk or two, and he doesn't want me to be a common farmer's wife, and no more do I. I wasn't born or trained to it, Lewis. And the upshot is, Uncle Tillson's going to see you himself soon and offer you a position in his office and warehouse up in the City, where you'll have a good chance of working up to be a partner. And if you consent, Lew, he'll make us a wedding-present of the lease of a little house near his own villa at Knightsbridge, and you and him can ride in together to the City every day. Oh, don't interrupt, Lew! Just listen a bit. You'll have a good salary and rises. You'll learn all about the corn business, and even if the Corn Laws are repealed it won't hurt *you*, for you'll be selling corn from over the seas, as well as home-grown. You'll live and dress like a gentleman, and we'll have genteel friends. And it's a lovely little house. You wait till you see the front of it and the geraniums and those blue flowers—lobelias—the last tenant's left in the garden. Gay as gay, like the Bingley's place. And inside it's that *convenient*! Oh, Lewis, we could be rare and happy in that little house!'

Janet found that her voice was trembling almost uncontrollably. Something urgent, angry, loving, seemed to be compelling her to drive this slow-moving man along the road of her ambition, but he remained silent, watching with downcast face the nervous passage of her small finger up and down his bare arm.

'I know you're fond of a country life,' she resumed, steadyng her tone. 'You like growing things regular, "rotation of crops" I heard you call it, going round like the clock and always knowing where to expect everything. You like mucking about. But if you worked here for forty years, Lewis, you'd never own the land—'tis all leasehold; and you'd never be ought but a working farmer, never a gentleman farmer and your own real master. Or if you did, by the time you got there you'd have lost the gentleman in the farmer.'

'I wasn't born a gentleman,' said Lewis, 'and I'd just as lief bide as I am. And you were not born a lady, Janey.'

'There isn't a gentleman or a lady in the land, Lew, that isn't one because, near or far back, their folks raised themselves in life and gave their children chances. If you're contented to stop down by the hedgerow forgetting the schooling your father earned for you and not turning it to account, I'm not content to stop there with you, and you can tell parson not to put up those banns, come Sunday, and that's a fact!'

Janet dropped her hand from his arm and they stood regarding each other intently.

'Don't you love me enough, then, without a black coat and a cravat?' asked Lewis. 'Do outsides mean so much to you, Janey?'

'It's not just outsides with me, Lew. Listen! A man who doesn't take a good chance to raise himself and get into a higher place in the world when it's offered him and he's got the cleverness in him that could use the chance, he's lazy, no matter if he do get up at five of a morning and go harvesting all day long. A right man, he does all he can to give his wife a better position than she had afore she took him. If he can't do it and it's no fault of his, she won't bear him no grudge, but if he could do it and won't be bothered, then she knows he doesn't truly love her.'

'My old Dad,' replied Lewis, looking down again, this time at a small red pimpernel amid the corn-stubble over which he drew his foot, 'he gave me education because by the time I was born he was able to afford it. Steve's a lot older than I am. Dad had a notion my education would help Steve's farming and we'd all climb up a bit that way.'

'Steve can get on well enough by himself. Let him go his own gait, he's obstinate and he doesn't thank anyone for advice. Why, he won't even buy one of these reaping machines!'

'No, not yet. Times are cruel hard for the poor and he likes to find a job for everyone he can, come harvest.'

'So he says, but it's my belief that he doesn't care to be bothered with new notions. But it's not Steve I came here to talk about. It's you and me and those banns.'

Lewis raised his gaze from the crushed pimpernel and rested it on the moving figures across the half-reaped field. His face wore a puzzled troubled expression, like that of a man half-asleep and uncertain of his own vision.

'Tis all very well to talk the way you do, Janey,' he persisted, 'and no doubt Mr. Tillson's making me a handsome offer, though I'd like to know first just how much money he expects I could

invest with him in return for a salary and a place in his business. But I've never thought of book-keeping and figuring except as kind of my part in the farm. Farming's a business same as any other, and I was born into it.'

'But that's what Uncle Tillson knows!' cried Janet eagerly. 'You're wise about wheat and grain. You're a rare good judge of corn, and you understand more about markets than most. You've a head for figures and facts, and your writing is a picture. Uncle Tillson's taken such a liking to you as never was. He says you could make a fortune if you chose in the wholesale trade, and we should be living in comfort all the time.'

'New Farm's comfortable enough.'

'Then you'd better marry one of those great potato-women you've hired for the stooking, and live there,' said Janet angrily. 'For you won't get me!'

Lewis produced a red handkerchief, removed his hat, and wiped his face slowly and thoroughly. His rough thick hair stood on end. Janet's foot, fidgeting on the stubble, longed to stamp. Anger in Lewis would just now be definitely helpful, but he withheld it. His face emerged refreshed and reasonably free of sweat and dust from the folds of red cotton-stuff, and he stowed the handkerchief away methodically. With curiously light fingers he touched the spreading muslin of her gown.

'I understand you,' he said slowly. 'You're town-bred. Sparrowfield's growing and your people have kept shop there and lived in shops and offices for many a day. Come the afternoon, and off goes print and on goes muslin, weekdays and all. You're right, Janet. You're not the wife for a working farmer.'

'What are you going to do about it?'

'Firstly this,' said Lewis, and swept her suddenly, in a flurry of muslin and back-tilted bonnet, against him. His arms, strong as young oxen, gripped her remorselessly. He kissed her like one who administered corporal punishment, and she retained her dignity with difficulty.

'And next,' continued Lewis, releasing her, 'I'll give you a promise. I'll talk to your Uncle Tillson when he calls or writes to me. More I won't promise. It depends.'

'Well, if you *don't* take his offer,' answered Janet, 'that's the last kiss you'll ever get from me, Lewis Brown!'

'Maybe,' said Lewis, 'and maybe not. I reckon I'd rather grow corn and what you call muck about with it than sit in an office'

selling it in a black coat. I've a feeling I'd be a square peg in a round hole in such a place : that I might get jammed in that hard I couldn't move, and perhaps I'd never be a partner after all. And I'd have given up my independence for . . . that.'

'Nonsense ! You a square peg ! You're fitted perfect for just such a business, Lewis, and you know it.'

'You women, you do push us on or drag us down, don't you ? Supposin' you find later that you've pushed me into the wrong place, that you've made me kind of lose something you'd like to have back again ?'

'I don't understand what you mean !'

He laughed.

'No more do I, not really. I don't know what made me say it, Janey. I like figuring. I like keeping records and accounts and so on. But there's something in me makes me afraid of getting shut up inside a town life and losing the want to get out of it. I dunno !'

'Now you're talking silly. How can you be shut up in town if you live, like Uncle Tillson, at Knightsbridge? That's country. And look how things are, Lewis. Small farming don't pay. Steve can do better on New Farm by himself, now you've set things right; he wants to marry himself, but two families can't live together at the farm-house, and you're the younger and can't afford to rent a separate place. I had trouble enough to get my people to approve our tokening, and then 'twas only because they liked you for yourself and knew Uncle Tillson would do something about it. If you say No to what he has to offer, then it's No to me too, Lewis ; and I want you, I do want you !'

She had not meant to say that last phrase, but she had said it, and, speaking, she turned and fled suddenly back through the little side-gate. Her feet, as abruptly as they had come to the stubble of the cornfield, passed back from it to the black and white chequered linoleum of a little suburban hall. The doors of a century swung to and clashed behind her.

She stood, dazed and trembling, listening to the sound near at hand of an over-boiling kettle on a gas-stove.

Lewis Harley shifted his dispatch-case to his other hand and gripped a strap of the District Railway carriage resignedly. A dozen other strap-hangers swayed about him like dependent leaves on a tree as the train took the points at East Sparrowfield, first of

the three Sparrowfield stations of which his was the last. He was hot and tired as the rest, immeasurably bored with a job which absorbed quantities of time in the endless trivialities which put grit into the wheels of social progress. When he got home, after a cup of tea, perhaps he'd go down to the tennis club or there'd be something to do in the garden, where a man could breathe. Since Sunday and that dust-up with Janet over the potted geraniums there had been no temptation to linger in the house. She let him alone now in the garden. One fiddled about there and made jobs rather than come in to supper until it was strictly necessary and the kids were out of the way. Kids! What was he raising kids for? To be little Strap-hangers and Civil Servants? Safety—Oh, Safety First! In these desperate days of unemployment a man was lucky who had certainty and interest for his children. Yes; he, Lewis Harley, was a fortunate fellow and knew it. He was quite satisfied, quite. If once you admitted Janet's restless point of view into your mind all peace and pleasure would be shattered. Don't leave your rut. Don't go abroad for holidays or stir up the old stifled cravings at the bottom of your mind. That doesn't do for a bread-winner. Besides, *she* wants London—Paris and New York, and *I* want . . . big fields somewhere, space, and the song of the plough. Idiotic! How do I know that I want *that*? Why should I want it, born and bred a townsman? Fancy, but a persistent fancy, always recurring when one was a little tired.

The train slowed into West Sparrowfield. He might have sat down at Central, when half a carriage had been emptied, but it did not seem worth while. He got out, climbed the station steps, yielded a glimpse of a season-ticket to a new clerk not yet fully acquainted with Sparrowfield regulars, and turned his steps toward Cherry Road. Marriage and Cherry Road and the Civil Service. The song-cycle of his life. Possibly the song-cycle of his children. Safety First.

The circular cement-bound porch of Number Five engulfed him into its shadow. Opening the door he heard a clock strike six, but not yet the sound of the children's voices. Usually they were getting ready for high tea and bed about now, but of course they'd been going out to-day and would be home a bit late. Passing through the house he found his wife engaged in laying a table in the summer-house which he had constructed at the end of the lawn.

'Hello!' She looked up at his approach.

'It seems nice and cool here,' she explained. 'I thought you'd like it.' Her voice had recovered its friendly affectionate tone, missing during the past week.

'Thanks.' He sat down in a deck-chair and stretched long legs gratefully. 'Some summer!' he remarked, accepting a cup of tea.

'Yes.'

Lewis looked round at his garden, and immediately as always the mood of half-rebellion against the circumstances of his life subsided, leaving him content. After all, this quiet routine, his desk at the office where he could put his hand on any given item in the dark, his house and garden where familiar furniture and flowers could always be enjoyed in their regular places, his games of suburban cricket, tennis, casual golf, these things spelt peace and security won and held from a hard, winged, world. His spasmodic nostalgia for more elbow-room never lasted very long.

Janet was oddly silent, for some minutes. Then she said abruptly: 'Were any of your people ever farmers, Lewis, here or anywhere?'

He looked at her in some surprise.

'No,' he said. 'My mother's grandmother came from Sparrowfield, the old town. Her father was a Skillicome, a linen-draper or something.'

'Your great-grandmother,' said Janet musingly. 'Yes . . . I suppose she might have been married in the Hungry 'forties, the Corn Law time. What was her name?'

'Skilli . . . Oh, her *married* name? Brown; full name, Jane Brown. As my mother used to say, a most unusual name.'

'What was her husband?'

'A head-clerk or something to a firm of corn merchants in the City, I believe, but I don't know much about him. Why?'

'What was *his* Christian name? Was it Lewis?'

'Might have been that or Nebuchadnezzar for all I know,' answered Lewis, rather irritably. 'What are you trying to get at, Janet?'

'I've had a queer sort of afternoon,' said Janet. 'Perhaps I'll tell you about it, when you're not in one of your stodgy unbelieving moods. It's made me wonder whether my name isn't Jane and whether I once made you lose something I'd like you to have had again.'

'Look here, old dear,' he said anxiously, 'you haven't had a touch of the sun—or a cocktail, have you?'

'I haven't had a cocktail, anyhow, Lewis. But listen. Are you really quite satisfied with our way of life and your work? Supposing you had a free choice, would you still choose this kind of thing or what would you choose?'

'Have you come into a fortune or what?'

'No such luck, but tell me all the same, Lewis. I've a reason for wanting to know, seriously I have.'

Lewis suspended operations upon the pipe he had gleaned and brought out with him in his passage through the house.

'Choose?' he said uncertainly. 'Choose?'

'Yes, choose. If you weren't bothering your head about me or anybody, but just your own inclinations.'

She waited tensely for his reply, watching him. His face wore the puzzled, troubled expression which she had observed upon it an hour—or was it a century?—ago.

'When I first met you, old thing,' said Lewis slowly, 'I was seriously thinking of emigrating and trying to go "back to the land" somewhere or other. Mercifully you saved me from that.'

'I saved you?'

'Yes. There's nothing in it—fruit farming and so on. An uncertainty, that or any other kind of farming. And you're not the wife for a working farmer.'

'How do you know?'

'My dear girl, look in the glass! I didn't want to turn you into a glorified charwoman, and if I'd risked my little capital on such an experiment we'd have been jammed into it so that we couldn't move out. If it didn't prosper you'd have been condemned to mucking about doing chores early and late for the rest of your life, if you stuck to me. Anyhow, I didn't really know enough about it.'

'So you gave up your independence for me?'

'I don't know as much. Which is the most independent, Janet? The fellow who's a slave to the land or the fellow who's a slave to an office? If I'd been born and bred a farmer it might have been different. Then there's a fair chance of becoming your own master. But the amateur has to buy his experience, and all my people have been townsfolk, and I hadn't the money to throw away. Anyhow, farming seems to be a pretty good wash-out everywhere to-day.'

'Women,' said Janet, 'do push a man on or drag him down, don't they, Lewis?'

'Er . . .' said Lewis, '. . . I suppose they do.' He paused, grinning good humouredly. 'It's a bit too late now to push me anywhere, Janet. Sorry to disappoint you.'

'I don't want to, not now,' said Janet. 'Stay "put" and love me, Lewis.' She rose, and kissed him fleetingly as she passed toward the house. 'There are the children coming in,' she said, aloud, and in secret, as she crossed the lawn, 'Oh, Jane, you little beast, how I'd like to smack you!'

Her eyes glanced at the brave blue and scarlet of the long border. 'I planted you,' she said to the geraniums and lobelia, 'I planted you for Lewis nearly a hundred years ago, and you've gone on flowering for him ever since, I do believe! And now I can't turn you back into corn. I've tamed him and grown you, and that's progress. Poor Lew! I wanted him, and I got him—but I still want him, thank God; but I wonder just what he *would* have been doing to-day if Jane Skillicome had let him alone?'

#### PENN COTTAGE.

Now that I own all I have ever sought—

A small, white, crofter's cottage, thatched and old,  
So old indeed that Shakespeare might have walked  
Down this green lane and seen it standing there,  
With three low-ceilinged, curiously-shaped rooms  
Dark with great criss-cross beams of polished oak  
And old warped doors with crumbling wooden latches . . .  
Round it a garden with four stately elms  
And the straight orchard with its seven tall damsons  
And a small stream with willows on its banks . . .

Now that I own all these, so dearly bought,  
Surely the soul should find its own content,  
Resolve, in this green paradise, its peace?

But no; nor trees nor stream nor straggling willows,  
Nor this white cottage smiling in the sun  
Can ease a heart heavy with banishment,  
Now you are gone.

FRANK EYRE.

*THE LADY OF CORFE CASTLE.*

BY LAURA LUCIE NORSWORTHY.

## I.

THERE is a miniature of her in curls and flowing garments with the key of the castle held close to her ample waist. A strong key fit for the work it had to do, for when the Roundheads stormed the outposts of her stronghold it was at once her security and her guard.

She was the lady of Corfe, and Corfe was the last of the southern castles to surrender to the Parliament. You may see the ruins of it yet, above the stone-built town that bears its name, beyond the road that leads from Bournemouth to Swanage. They are ruins that the Parliament men made of one of the oldest and most impregnable of British strongholds and which the centuries that followed have crumbled and rent till only the shadow of Corfe's greatness crowns the hill where once it stood supreme.

The castle had been the property of kings from time immemorial until Queen Elizabeth—shrewd and thrifty—deemed it convenient to let her subjects maintain at their own expense instead of at the expense of the Crown some of the royal fortresses. And in course of time it came, by purchase, into the hands of Sir John Bankes, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in the reign of Charles I. And Sir John Bankes was the husband of the lady with the curls and the key.

So she became the lady of Corfe Castle, and the story of the castle in its last years is for all time hers. She was born Miss Mary Hawtrey. Her father was the last of the squires of Ruislip, in Middlesex, the first of whom had come into England with the Conqueror. For six hundred years they had come and gone, leaving their names behind them in the stones that pave the church at Ruislip. And Ruislip was not the dreary suburb we pass through if we would ride to London that way to-day but a charming countryside, with orchards and fields of corn, and woods where game was plentiful and good.

Mary Hawtrey was an only daughter, and it was fitting that when she married she should become châtelaine of Corfe, because with the traditions in which she had been bred none knew better how to appreciate what the castle stood for.

By the time she settled there she had long been the wife of Sir John Bankes and was already the mother of many young sons and daughters. But she was quite equal to coping both with so extensive a demesne and so numerous a family. The moral atmosphere she gave to Corfe matched the strength of its building. She had a presence which could be felt as well in her absence as when she was at home and a will not easily thwarted nor moved from a decision.

In looks Lady Bankes was not uncomely. She wore her curls in ringlets on either side of a smooth, oval face. Fine eyes and a shapely mouth softened the severity of a broad, uncovered brow, a strong nose, and a decided chin. Her expression was one of firm and spirited efficiency.

## II.

It was during the threatening year of 1642, when political winds were blowing high for the storms of Civil War, that Lady Bankes and her children retired to the comparative safety of Corfe. Sir John was not with them. He had been called by his duties to another part of the country.

Corfe Castle was then in its magnificent entirety. It stood on a rugged hill inaccessible except from the great gateway—hooded and flanked by massive towers—which could be reached only from across a narrow bridge built high above a stream that had been converted into a wide and deep moat.

It was an impressive home but a cold and gloomy one. Apart from the ominous reminders of vaults and dungeons, of walls, and wards, and towers, and ramparts, it was gloomy. The great rooms were badly lit. The windows, cut out of walls which in some places were twelve feet thick, were inadequate and draughty. The castle was exposed to every gale that blew and to the fiercest rays of summer sun and the hardest frosts of winter.

The furnishings did little to relieve the dark austerity of the interior. They were as heavy as they were handsome. The chambers were decorated with a variety of superb hangings. In one room the story of Astrea and Celadon lined the walls in eight pieces of superfine dorcias twelve feet deep. In another, Constantine told his tale in tapestry, handwoven in colours.

Lady Bankes took an interest in every detail. She was as proud of her kitchen as she was of her state-rooms. She excelled in the grandeur and comfort of her beds. Some were carved, some inlaid,

some richly gilt, some were almost as large as rooms, and all had hangings in beautiful fabrics, with counterpoints to match. The simplest of these were a green cloth bed embroidered with tent stitch slips of flowers and lined with Isabella coloured sarsenet, and a bed in white dimity wrought with black.

All through the long winter of 1642-3 and the early days of spring Lady Bankes added to the vast pile of needlework the castle already contained and, while watching over her children and demesne, waited for news from the outside world.

It drifted in from the little town at the foot of the castle hill. Travellers passing to Wareham and Poole reported that the King's party was losing ground. Fortresses were being taken by the Parliament all over the country.

By May Day, 1643, Corfe Castle was the only Royalist stronghold left on the Dorset coast. Lady Bankes knew that though attack on Corfe had been delayed it was sure to come. But she had no fears for its safety.

### III.

It had long been the custom for the owner of Corfe Castle to throw open the gates and offer hospitality to any of the neighbours who chose to course a stag on May Day. Visitors were then allowed to view the magnificent state apartments. This was always a fête to the country people who came in numbers to witness the sport and share the free entertainment.

On May Day of 1643 Lady Bankes found herself between the devil of Parliament and the deep sea of hospitality. Hospitality prevailed. The huntsmen met as usual. But presently it was rumoured that troops of Parliament men were in the neighbourhood. Parliament men, according to Lady Bankes, boded no good at any time, but when they chose a day to come prowling round when the castle was open to visitors, discretion was wiser than generosity.

So Lady Bankes gave orders that the castle gates were to be locked and strictly guarded. Nobody was to be allowed to enter. The people dispersed with murmurs of alarm and the stag hunt came to an abrupt end.

Before long a troop of Parliament men came clattering over the bridge at the entrance and looked askance at the raised portcullis. They had come, they said, to visit the castle as was the custom.

The guard in reply may not have been quite tactful but at any rate did not mince matters.

The Roundhead commanders replied that there was no question of any attempt to take the castle by strategy. But the men, not given to diplomacy, hinted darkly that on the contrary this was the very object they had in view.

They did not try force, however, for they were insufficiently prepared and they knew the resources of the castle. They retired crestfallen to plan assault from another angle.

Presently a letter was delivered to Lady Bankes from the Parliamentary Commissioners at Poole airing a grievance about certain pieces of cannon the lady had at Corfe. These, they said, were mounted on their carriages and gave an unhappy air of hostility. Would the lady hand them over to the Commissioners as soon as maybe?

Lady Bankes replied that the pieces in question were her own. She may well have pointed out to the Commissioners that they had been at Corfe since the days of the Spanish Armada. They were not intended to be aggressive now, however, and to prove it they would be dismounted forthwith. But give them up she would not.

To this the Commissioners agreed. The lady performed her part of the promise and the cannon and carriages parted company. But the Commissioners proved backsliders.

Very early one morning some forty seamen appeared at the castle gates. It was very early indeed, but Lady Bankes dealt with them in person. They had come, they explained, to collect the cannon. Lady Bankes asked for their warrant. On this being produced she ordered her men and her maid servants to mount the pieces on their carriages again and fire a round.

She had but five men in the castle—the rest of her retainers were women—but they proved a match for the forty seamen without. At the first roar from the cannon's mouth the sailors retired with flattering precipitation.

When they had gone the sound of the castle horn echoed from the Purbeck hills, resounded from the roofs of Corfe, and died away to seaward.

The Royalist neighbours answered in person. They came on horseback and they came on foot. Soon they had rallied round to the number of a considerable guard. There was a good deal of discussion, and it ended in the Royalist neighbours settling down to enjoy the fruits of Lady Bankes' excellent housekeeping, to watch the town from the keep, and to have an eye on the cannon.

This state of things did not meet with the approval of the Parliament Commissioners. After about a week of it they let it be known that unless the Royalist gentlemen returned to their homes their houses would be fired.

So drastic a threat brought the gentlemen's wives with great haste to the castle, where they held forth on the futility of saving the homes of others while their own were in jeopardy. There was a great deal of expostulation, argument, and commotion—and then Lady Bankes was left alone again with her children and her servants, to face the next move of the Commissioners.

She found that she had not done herself much good by sounding the castle horn. A week's keep of so many hearty neighbours had depleted her larder. It had also roused the Parliament men to action. They set a watch without the gates, allowing none to enter and none to come forth, and they forbade the supply of any sort of provender to Lady Bankes or members of her household.

The result of this—marooned as they were on the summit of a barren hill—soon brought about a shortage. The nursery was full of plump and hearty girls and boys ruled over with a firm hand by an old nurse who believed in food for nearly every ill. The children themselves had made a great game of the threats to their castle so long as they could combat them by firing a round on sailors and entertaining their county neighbours—but they had no use for empty stomachs. This was carrying things a little too far.

Lady Bankes could not see her children starve. She consented, reluctantly enough, to parley with the Rebels. She even agreed to give up the cannon if the Parliament men would leave her alone. After all there were but four pieces and the biggest carried only a three-pound bullet. What were four pieces of cannon compared with the lives of her children?

So the offending ordnance were removed, and the Commissioners, though they did not withdraw their guard, took no further active steps for the time being. They were busy elsewhere and they considered the castle as good as theirs when they wanted it. For these reasons the guard relaxed vigilance—ceased to trouble about what went in and who came out. At all events they did not appear to notice that the lady was filling her store-rooms with food and her strong-rooms with muskets, that she was finding safe places for a large supply of powder and match, and everything necessary to withstand a siege.

Presently she heard that the King's nephew, Prince Maurice, was

not far away. Accordingly she sent to him to ask for someone to take charge of the castle as a military fortress.

By the time the Parliament men arrived to take possession they found they had been outwitted. Instead of walking in unmolested they were obliged to keep a safe distance. For the castle, besides being fully equipped, was now manned by about eighty soldiers under two able commanders—Captain Lawrence and Captain Bond.

#### IV.

The Parliament men settled down to the attack with between two and three hundred men-at-arms, and tried firing at the castle from the hills. This made a good deal of noise but no impression. They then fired some houses in the town to show they were in earnest, and went away to collect more forces.

When they returned they were under the command of Sir Walter Erle—a shining light among Dorset Parliament men but no warrior. He was supplied with a variety of ordnance manned by between five and six hundred soldiers, horse and foot.

They came one misty morning in June when the town was invisible from the castle behind banks of cloud. So they were unhampered by fire from the castle garrison and could command the situation. By the time the mist had cleared, Lady Bankes, looking down from the keep on the roofs of Corfe, saw men in armour swarming through the streets, and the Parliament colours hanging limply above the house-tops.

The town had surrendered. Corfe Castle stood alone—a Royalist island in a Roundhead sea.

Then the Rebels brought to bear every weapon known in seventeenth-century warfare on those strong walls that had withstood for centuries the battery both of man-made arms and Time. They made a rampart and a rendezvous of the town church at the base of the castle hill. Batteries were set in action from this vantage and small shot was played from among the tombs upon the walls and towers. The Parliament men stripped the church of lead to provide themselves with bullets and broke up the organ pipes to make their powder horns.

As all this proved ineffective they presently brought a couple of engines to the attack. These they called the 'sow' and the 'boar.' The engines were fitted with planks and lined with wool and filled with men, who firing from inside might approach the castle without danger to themselves yet near enough to do deadly havoc—with luck.

The boar never went into action because the sow, going forward first, lost all the men she had. Like Achilles of old their ankles were vulnerable. Thus the sow proved a reliable target for musket practice from the castle, and the men within her, disbanding as rapidly as their exposed and wounded feet would let them, put her promptly out of action.

Nothing daunted by the failure of the sow the Parliament men continued the attack. They returned, however, to ordnance. Day by day the thunder of cannon echoed from the Purbeck hills and boomed up from the valleys. So near were the besieging party that the sound of their voices floated to the top of the castle hill, and at times the castle garrison could hear the orders they gave.

After a while, however, the Roundheads got tired of wasting time and ammunition for nothing. Besides, there was the expense to be considered. So they called for further reinforcements.

These came in the form of 150 sailorsmen and a procession of wagons containing granadoes, petards, and scaling ladders.

Rewards were offered to the men who would hazard the scaling of the walls and they were promised an adequate quantity of drinks to help them over. But, as none of the Parliamentary commanders were prepared to lead their men in person, there was considerable hanging back among the rank and file.

Sir Walter Erle encased himself in safety garments and directed operations from the least dangerous point he could find, but he flatly refused to lead scaling operations from any nearer. He gave orders for his men to be plied with a liberal supply of intoxicants, and having roused them to temporary valour, got them to the foot of the scaling ladders.

They found the lower ward guarded by Captain Lawrence and his soldiers, and if they had omitted to reckon with Lady Bankes in connection with the attack they found they had to reckon with her now.

She was in possession of the upper wards, and guarding them in person, with her children, her women, and her five serving men. She placed them at advantageous points under the walls, and saw to the constant supply of stones and red-hot embers with which they kept up an unfailing fire, throwing these missiles over where the scaling ladders were placed, and so driving back their assailants.

The attack failed. It did more. It brought the siege to a close. A good many Parliament men had been killed and others put out of action, yet nothing gained. In the midst of the indecision following the failure of the assault came the rumour that the King's forces were

just behind. The news spread as only news can. The Parliament men, not waiting to verify the rumour—for the surrender of Bristol was still hot in their minds—deserted Corfe Castle abruptly. Leaving their supper spread among the tombs in the church and their horses alone on the seashore, they scrambled into boats, and made for safe harbourage in Poole.

Thus was lifted, on August 4, 1643, after lasting six weeks, the first siege of Corfe Castle, during the Civil War.

## V.

The triumph of Lady Bankes was complete while it lasted. Corfe Castle was again besieged—this time by neighbours as honest in their admiration as they were eager to display it. She was the heroine of the hour. And had she been less wise her head would certainly have been turned.

But she never forgot the upbringing that had been hers at Ruislip nor the essence distilled in herself by those six hundred years of squiredom that were her heritage, and which, while showing her she would be exalted for what she had, bade her be honoured for what she was.

So she turned towards those who had suffered by their loyalty more than she herself had suffered. And when the gates of Corfe Castle were once more thrown open, went down into the town and up among the hills to see what help she could render wherever fire and sword had left trouble behind them.

And thus it came about that when King Charles could spare her husband to return for a while to his family Sir John Bankes found that his castle had become a place of refuge for the tenants and poor people, the destruction of whose homes had led them to seek safety there, and that his wife, with praiseworthy versatility, was filling the rôle of lady bountiful to them all.

It seemed now as though the political clouds were lifting. The continued successes of the King's nephews—Prince Rupert and Prince Maurice—left the ultimate issue of the quarrel between the Crown and the Parliament in doubt, but they served to raise hope in the hearts of the Royalists, and to bring in nervous and faltering adherents. So far as the south was concerned, Bristol, Exeter, Dorchester and Portland all surrendered again—this time to the Crown—and Lady Bankes had the satisfaction of knowing that Corfe Castle alone had never wavered from that allegiance.

These successes, however, were but a swing of the pendulum of

human uncertainty. When the pendulum swung back again it went further than before.

By the winter of 1643-4 Lady Bankes was once more alone. Sir John had gone to the King at Oxford and left his wife to watch over Corfe.

Two Royalist neighbours—Sir John Borlace and Sir Robert Jenkinson—had each sought the honour of marrying one of Lady Bankes' two elder daughters. They took their wives with them when they went to Oxford to join Sir John Bankes in the King's train, and Lady Bankes was left with her eight younger children. Unfortunately none of the sons were old enough to be of assistance in shouldering responsibility, or taking a lead, so it became necessary to garrison the castle again with someone in command.

Captain Lawrence—now become a Colonel—once more took charge, and with him were a Colonel Anketil and a Colonel Pitman. Thus the weary months of 1644 crept on, and the news that crept with them was gloomy to Lady Bankes. Everywhere she heard that neighbours were going over to the Parliament. It was not long before Corfe Castle again stood alone.

This time came the true test of endurance. Her anxieties were many. Her home was overrun by strange officers and strange men. It could not be supposed that she would like them all. Her expenses were enormous. Her husband was helping the King financially and their resources were rapidly depleting. The future of her children had grown uncertain. The future of the Crown was more uncertain still. Yet she held on, living from hour to hour, for the task that was hers.

## VI.

In December, 1644, Sir John Bankes died at Oxford. Although he had never been at Corfe during the attacks on his home, his name had been a stay to support his family in imagination and to be of real assistance when money was required. His death left Lady Bankes with only a precarious jointure—precarious because owing to his allegiance to the King his estates had been forfeited to the Parliament not long before he died.

Lady Bankes was profoundly grieved, but she treated the situation with characteristic firmness. She refused to recognise the Parliament in the matter of the forfeiture and, believing that possession is nine points of the law, remained rooted at Corfe.

So passed the year 1645—the first of her widowhood. But by

the autumn the Parliament had grown tired of her stubborn resistance. Late in October Colonel Bingham—then Governor of Poole—received orders to use drastic measures to subdue her. General Fairfax himself sent reinforcements to that end.

By this time the fame of Lady Bankses was widespread. The perilous position in which the last order of the Parliament now placed her was viewed with concern by the Royalist party, and a gallant young Cavalier offered to essay the hazard of rescuing her and her children. His name was Cromwell, but he is not known to History as any relation of the Protector.

Heading a troop of some 120 men Colonel Cromwell marched to Corfe in January, 1646. It was, in fact, the rapidity with which he advanced that led him safely there, though when close to the Round-head quarters he adopted a ruse—common in those days—to get by without hindrance. He displayed the colours and his troop wore the same sort of scarfs as General Fairfax's own men. This brought him to Wareham, where, by another ruse—which included setting fire to a powder magazine—he succeeded in taking a trio of prisoners, of whom the Governor of Wareham was one, and with these trophies mounted behind three of his men arrived at the base of the castle hill.

The Parliament men assembled there were busy with the blockade, and they tried at first to bar Colonel Cromwell's passage. But it is to be supposed that news of his coming had penetrated to the castle beforehand or that the rescue party had resumed the Royalist colours—for the castle garrison welcomed them with resounding cheers, and, swarming upon the walls, threatened to come out and join them if the Parliament men showed fight.

The Parliament men did not show fight. Perhaps the Governor of Wareham and his colleagues had something to do with it. They may have had misgivings about the personal results of an impromptu battle at such close quarters. Certain it is that the blockading party put no really serious obstacles in the way of Colonel Cromwell's approach to the castle gates and he, his troop, and his prisoners rode safely in.

Lady Banks met them in person. What cheer the castle contained was put at their disposal, and quarters were prepared for their reception.

Colonel Cromwell presented his prisoners to Lady Banks as a gift for her acceptance and with charming grace delivered his errand. He had come, he said, to release her and take her to some place of safety with her children. Would she allow him to be her escort ?

Lady Bankes was deeply touched. Barren wintriness without—hope deferred within—were forgotten in the presence of that loyal ardour which had dared all danger to reach her. She thanked Colonel Cromwell gratefully, and with true appreciation, but she courteously declined to leave Corfe Castle. Nor would she part with her children.

In this, as events proved, she was right. Colonel Cromwell on his return journey was captured and his troop dispersed. A woman and eight children would have overwhelmed him in difficulties.

But it was a bad thing for Lady Bankes that he left Corfe. It was a bad thing for her, too, that he left the Governor of Wareham behind him, for that gentleman was up to no good.

Her troubles indeed were pressing, and they were rendered infinitely worse by the fact that conditions in the castle were growing daily more difficult.

## VII.

A state of siege necessitates the enforcement of rules and regulations which are irksome and irritating. They involve hardship and sacrifice. Moreover, a number of people cooped together for an indefinite period in a space measured by yards, confined by walls, and compassed by an enemy cannot all be at all times in the sweetest of tempers. The different dispositions among them have to be forced into a common mould, and discordant tastes and ideas jangled together. This state of things at Corfe Castle could not be expected to go on without friction for many months on end.

And of course it did not. There was too much to make things uncomfortable. Food, water, and firing had to be doled out without the advantage of modern resources, and darkness was a real source of fear.

Food was mostly of the dried and stored variety—rough at that. For fresh meat there were a certain number of cattle, sheep and pigs available, but these would not last indefinitely and their keep was a serious consideration.

The castle wells were deep but did not yield an unlimited supply of water. The century was one when personal bathing was not absolutely *de rigueur* and there was not a bathroom in the whole castle—but a certain amount of cleaning had to be done and water was necessary for cooking and drinking.

Firing could not be obtained from the bare castle hill and what store there was had to be used with care however cold the weather.

Add to this that the castle garden was small and contained a quite

inadequate supply of fruit and vegetables and it will be appreciated that Lady Bankes's power of self-denial was second only to her courage.

When darkness fell there were shadows everywhere—in the corners of the great rooms, on the winding stairs and in the halls and passages. And it was a time when shadows might prove dangerous. Candles used sparingly give but a diffident kind of light, and torches are fitful—now blazing into flame to make weird shapes of ordinary things—now sinking to a glow in the heart of impenetrable darkness.

The prospect without was scarcely brighter than that within. The great buildings rose gaunt and grey against the sky, and from the narrow windows the distant views were rather a source of discontent than pleasure because they were out of bounds. The ground at the disposal of the garrison was bleak and bare. Exercise had to be taken in the wards where rough grass was the only green to meet the eye, and even that soon browned under the glaring heat of summer sun, and withered under the endless tramp of feet. Everywhere were stone walls and open, barren spaces. In winter strong winds swept them. At times frost covered the steep ascent with ice like glass, at others deep drifts of snow lay piled beneath the ramparts or spread, smooth and white, over castle and hill.

The Governor of Wareham soon got tired of watching a scene so unchanging. He forgathered with Colonel Lawrence and laid one or two proposals before him. They were men of the same county and they may have been friends before their political opinions drew them apart. At any rate they now found they had interests in common which had nothing to do with politics. Colonel Lawrence had been commanding Corfe Castle so long that he was sick of the sight of it, and the Governor of Wareham, though he had only been there a short while and had never commanded it at all, was sick of the sight of it too.

It seemed to them that no useful purpose was to be served by remaining there any longer. They could, of course, have acquired much material gain by delivering the fortress to the Parliament, but their loyalty to Lady Bankes would not allow it. They could escape themselves, however. And escape they did, each aiding the other.

Lady Bankes was hurt and shocked. But their departure only strengthened her resolution to see the siege through. At the same time it added to her anxieties, for she hardly knew who might desert her and who might not. She increased her vigilance and put more fervour into heartening the garrison.

Colonel Anketil took the place of Colonel Lawrence and he was assisted by Lieutenant-Colonel Pitman.

Colonel Pitman suggested reinforcements. He said the castle was undermanned. And while Colonel Anketil and Lady Banks were considering this he made plans of his own. The basis of his plans they would have called treachery. Colonel Pitman called it common sense. It was obvious that the Parliament had command of the country and it was equally obvious that Corfe Castle could not hold out for ever. When supplies were exhausted there would be no choice other than starvation or surrender. The whole garrison could not be expected to starve itself, and the longer it delayed surrender the worse its punishment would be at the hands of the enemy.

Colonel Pitman preferred peace to punishment and he decided not to wait indefinitely for what might be had at once.

He did not take Colonel Anketil into his confidence. Still less did he open the subject to Lady Banks. There was no use arguing with people who refused to see facts. He must act on his own initiative.

He did. There were Roundhead prisoners in the castle and he suggested to Colonel Anketil that one of them might be exchanged for his own brother who was a prisoner of the Parliament. This was quite legitimate and Colonel Anketil raised no objection. Colonel Pitman had, therefore, an ostensible reason for approaching Colonel Bingham, the Parliamentary Governor of Poole, who still commanded the blockade, and could treat with him without raising suspicion in the garrison.

But when Colonel Pitman approached Colonel Bingham it was to treat with him on other lines. Having taken the precaution to arrange for a protection to be sent down from the Parliament in London to ensure his personal safety in the event of anything untoward happening, he arranged to hand over the castle to Colonel Bingham.

He then returned to Colonel Anketil and again raised the question of reinforcements. He knew, he said, where to find above 100 men to strengthen the garrison, and it was agreed that he should leave the castle on this errand, to return on a given date with his reserves.

He went carefully into details with Colonel Anketil, and then, under cover of night, and with a great pretence of caution, he departed.

But he did not go further than Poole. And placing the onus of

providing the men on Colonel Bingham, enjoyed his freedom as best suited him while he waited for them to arrive.

### VIII.

There came a night when Colonel Anketil sat up to await the return of Colonel Pitman with his reinforcements.

A night without a moon had been chosen because of the necessity for getting so many men into the castle without the knowledge of the blockading party below. And when the night came it was dark and very cold.

At midnight Colonel Pitman was due, and at midnight Colonel Anketil was at the sallyport in one of the upper wards where they had arranged to meet. A precipitous climb was the only way to reach it from the outside and in the darkness this climb was perilous. Colonel Pitman manœuvred it, however, and brought his men to the sallyport. Many of them were disguised as Royalists, and these filed in first. By the time fifty had entered Colonel Anketil called a halt and said he could not have any more.

Colonel Pitman remonstrated—and to all appearance with reason—for 100 men was the number agreed upon and 100 men were there. But Colonel Anketil again demurred.

Colonel Pitman made a show of displeasure. He protested that this was not the way to treat him. He had brought the men there at the very risk of their lives and they would assuredly perish if exposed now to the cold and the blockading party. Colonel Anketil gave way and they filed in through the sallyport.

But those who had entered first had not been idle. Some of them knew the castle and had crept quietly to the Queen's tower and to the platforms before and behind the keep. Unobtrusively they took their stands, seemingly by accident, and with their cloaks drawn tightly round them waited in the cold and the darkness. They knew there were only six men in this part of the castle because it was beyond reach of attack. The garrison had quarters in the lower wards, and the great stairs, bulwark and ditch lay between.

Lady Bankes and her children lived in the Queen's tower, and it was not long before it began to dawn on them that something was wrong. It dawned on Colonel Anketil likewise. But Colonel Pitman's party were not afraid of half a dozen men and a few women. In spite of a shower of stones which was dropped on them from above by the indignant minority they stuck to their posts.

At last, slowly, the darkness faded and a faint light out-

lined the wards and the towers. Then, as dawn gave birth to morning, other shapes began to form till soon the courts and the platforms stood clearly forth, crowded with men. And day, shining on their shorn locks and their Roundhead helmets, gave to the blockading party the signal to advance.

Lady Bankes did all she could to outmanoeuvre them, but they had outmanoeuvred her. Nevertheless, she did not surrender meekly. There were thirty Parliament prisoners in the castle and their presence opened the way to treat with Colonel Bingham. A truce was called. Terms were arranged. And then—some of the Roundheads in their zeal having scaled the walls eager for plunder the garrison fired on them—and in a moment all was uproar.

The end might have come in wholesale massacre. But Colonel Bingham—a brave man and a good soldier—took instant command. He would have no killing. And, holding the men in check, saved the lives of the people—140 in all—immured within the castle. Two only of the garrison were slain in the struggle and one of the blockading party. The women and children were unhurt.

But for the last time the Lady of Corfe Castle had presided over the fortress—had worshipped in the Chapel in the lee of the keep. For the last time she had broken fast in the great dining-hall and gone to rest in her room with the canopied bed—a bed like a sea of down so deep and wide and soft it was—where night after night she had slept and prayed and suffered and planned through months that had lengthened into years.

And now the end of it all had come. She passed through the castle, taking leave of every part with profound emotion. The ghost of it lingers still among the ruins of that bleak hillside, and surely will linger on till never a trace of human work or human wrack remains there.

She reached the great gates at the entrance. The portcullis was lowered for her to pass out. And she left Corfe Castle for ever.

#### IX.

The work of slighting the fortress began at once. It was first ransacked of everything it held and its beautiful contents were scattered among the homes of the numerous Roundheads in the neighbourhood.

The work of destruction was costly and slow. Large sums of money were raised on the county rate and vast quantities of gunpowder wasted for the purpose. Yet Corfe Castle could not be

wiped out. It was abandoned at last—destroyed and useless—but with enough left standing to constitute a national monument of architectural resistance and Roundhead ruthlessness.

Lady Bankes returned to Ruislip—to her woods, her orchards, and fields of growing corn. On Sundays, in the pew where she had said her prayers when her little head could hardly reach the book ledge, she now came back to pray again. She lived fifteen years after she left Corfe Castle.

The Parliament declared her a delinquent and made some trouble about her jointure, but when Cromwell had restored law and order it was paid to her. Now and again during the Commonwealth her delinquency was remembered and she was called on to supply sums of money. She had to find £1,400 for herself and her seven younger children. This did not include the payments of her eldest son, Sir Ralph Bankes, nor those of Sir John Borlace and Sir Robert Jenkinson for her two eldest daughters. It did not include the other payments of varying amounts she had to make as time went on.

She lived to see the Commonwealth begin and end and the monarchy for which she had rendered such signal service once more restored. It does not appear that Charles II showed any marked appreciation of her effort, but he certainly permitted Sir Ralph Bankes to obtain restitution of the ruins of Corfe Castle and of his estates in Dorset. Sir Ralph Bankes had to build himself another home—at Kingston Lacy—where his descendants still live.

Lady Bankes took no further active hand in politics. She lived her last years in quiet domestic seclusion with her family. Her end appears to have been unexpected, for she died on the day her eldest son was married.

If you would follow her to her grave to pay that respect which three centuries on is still her due you will need to travel to Ruislip. And there, in the old church where she lies buried among her ancestors, you will see on the wall of the chancel the marble monument which her son, Sir Ralph Bankes, erected to her memory. And you will learn that

'Having Had The Honour To Have Borne With A Constancy And Courage Above Her Sex A Noble Proporeon Of The Late Calamities, And The Happiness To Have Outlived Them So Far As To Have Seene The Restitution Of The Government With Great Peace Of Mind Laid Down Her Most Desired Life, The 11th Day Of April 1661.'

**'SHIKAR' AND SORCERY.**

*AN ACTUAL EXPERIENCE.*

BY CAPT. P. S. CORBOULD.

'WELL, you'd better get something done about it pretty soon or else we shall have the whole lot of them bolting.'

The Deputy Commissioner of the Seoni District in the Central Provinces of India—rather backward in 1909 when the following experience took place—was looking worried as he said this and well he might. For some weeks now the villagers in one of the forest tracts had been living in a state of terror owing to the operations of a man-eating tiger, which had been carrying off some human victim almost daily. It would attack an old woman gathering grass, break into a lonely hut at night or boldly spring on to a group of men engaged in the removal of wood and bamboos.

The area affected was in a remote corner of the District which was not often visited by touring officials, as the few scattered villages were inhabited by a forest tribe of little concern to Magistrate, Doctor or Policeman. The only European who had much to do with them was the Forest Officer, as their labour was largely utilised in the extraction of wood, bamboos and various other forest produce. His frequent dealings with them had led him to value them highly since, as is very usually the case with the simple and uneducated Indian, they proved to be far more truthful and honest than the product of the Education Department in the more sophisticated parts of the country.

If a man came from one of these villages to make a complaint to him on some matter, the Forest Officer could be fairly certain that there was a good reason for the application and that it had not been the result of some deep intrigue to get a rival into trouble with the authorities. If they *did* occasionally give false evidence in Court, he knew that probably they had been driven by threats into giving wrong statements in order to back up some case in which their universal creditor—the local money-lender—was involved. Even under these circumstances it was practically certain that, if the examining official said 'Well, now that I have recorded your evidence, just tell me exactly what *did* happen,' they

would give quite happily a true account of the actual occurrence—naturally the complete opposite of what they had just given on oath!

Such childishly open methods were so much at variance with the behaviour of High School students that these ingenuous aborigines were well liked by all Europeans with whom they came in contact—quite apart from the notable help they gave in all matters of *shikar*.

If these poor simple villagers were being decimated by a man-eater, it was obvious that the Forest Officer must, as the Deputy Commissioner in charge of the District had just expressed himself, 'get something done about it.'

It was some weeks now since he had managed to visit the tiger-stricken area and matters had obviously not improved during the interval. The village watchmen in the reports, which they were required to submit regularly to the nearest Police or Range Office, had indicated that things were getting so bad that there was every probability that the people would desert their villages entirely—as it was obviously preferable to lose the harvest than their lives.

For these folk to leave their huts would not be a satisfactory method of solving the difficulty, however, as the man-eater would certainly transfer his attentions to other forest communities rather than go hungry, and the approach of the hot weather, with its urgent need for men to watch for and extinguish conflagrations, rendered their retention in the neighbourhood an absolute necessity. The only sound solution was to eliminate the tiger and that in the quickest possible time.

Although there were other matters of considerable importance to be dealt with elsewhere, the Forest Officer felt that this tiger business must take precedence of them all since, if the villagers once made up their minds to forsake their cultivated land, it would be a most difficult matter—if not an impossibility—to get them ever to return.

It did not take him long to give the necessary orders for his camels to start off with his camp kit that night—for this story is of the days before motor-cars rendered travel in India comparatively rapid and the game decidedly scarce. Four days later found him camped in a grove of *sal* trees near the most important of the little group of villages which formed such a well-stocked larder for the marauder, while messengers were sent to call the more

influential members of the surrounding communities for a discussion about the present state of affairs as well as future steps to destroy the animal which was the cause of the whole trouble.

Round the big camp fire that night in front of the Forest Officer's tent there gathered a strange-looking crowd of village elders and experienced hunters. They were not much to look at, as the fashionable dress for the occasion appeared to consist of a rag round the waist and a small axe hanging from the left shoulder, but they were all vitally interested in the matter under discussion.

From their reports it was evident that ordinary measures for dealing with this particular tiger were useless. He refused to touch the most tempting buffalo calves which had been tied up to attract him within range and seldom, if ever, came back for a second feed off one of his human victims. He seemed instinctively to know when a trap had been set on any of the paths over which he was accustomed to pass on his bloodthirsty excursions and he avoided anything which looked in the least suspicious with the wily skill of an old soldier. His goings and comings were easily recognisable by a malformation of one of his hind paws.

The only plan which did not seem to have been tried was for some hero to offer himself as a lure and sit about under a tree in which a man with a gun could be concealed. This was of course an excellent idea from the point of view of those who proposed for themselves the rôle of marksman who would shoot the tiger and so gain the reward of five hundred rupees which had already been offered for its killing. The only drawback, however, was the unanimous disinclination to act as ground-bait on the part of those who were suggested for that honour—usually by somebody who owed them a grudge!

All these facts were laid before the Forest Officer and, as he could not spare any great length of time away from his other duties, he found some difficulty in deciding what his next step should be. The discussion lasted late into the night and yet, when the meeting broke up, no concrete proposal that promised success had been put forward.

The next morning, while he was having his breakfast, he was told that a very old Gond (one of the aboriginal tribes) wished to speak with him. When the interview was granted, the aged man explained that he had been unable to come the previous night, but that he had heard of the total failure of the assembly

to find any plan which seemed likely to stop the operations of the man-eater.

'My lord, you are my father and mother.'

The official, well knowing this to be merely an introduction to some serious proposal, encouraged him to proceed and the other went on to make a suggestion which he hoped would meet with the Sahib's approval. He said that he had known it tried on more than one occasion in his youth and it had never failed in its object.

'Why then did you not do this before I came and so have saved me a long journey when I have a lot of other places to go to?' asked the harassed white man.

'Well, Sahib, you see it would cost four or five rupees and none of us have got so much. Even if one of us had, he would hardly spend all that money for other people.'

'I would gladly give ten times that amount if the scheme will really work. Just tell me what you have in mind and, if it seems sensible, I will find the money for it.'

The forest-dweller then began to explain that what he wished to have tried was the 'charm of the nail.' This, he said, consisted in taking a large iron spike to a certain holy man who lived some twenty miles away and who had inherited secret knowledge from his father and his father before that. This man's father had been successful on previous occasions during the speaker's youth and there seemed no reason why the son's efforts should not prove equally effective. After the nail had been left with the holy man for a night (during which time he would perform the necessary incantations over it), the villagers would fix it in a tree and 'Sahib, owing to the magic, the tiger will stop killing and there will be no more fear.'

This might have seemed a preposterous yarn to anyone who was less acquainted with the strange things which are done in the remoter parts of India and which are incapable of real explanation by Europeans, but he himself had seen almost incredible happenings brought about by what we should term 'magic,' and so was quite willing to risk the small sum which the old man's scheme involved.

On a previous occasion he—without any more elaborate preparations than the expenditure of four annas for a sacrificial white cockerel—had been able to shoot a certain tiger, over which the Lieutenant-Governor had spent much fruitless time and considerable money. This incident—although it had not exactly added

to his popularity with the mighty one in question—coupled with other similar happenings, had lessened the contemptuous disbelief which so many Europeans display towards the mysterious things which so frequently take place in the East.

In any case the gift of the rupees would please the villagers by enabling them to experiment with this remedy of theirs and, if he could only manage to keep them contented for another week or two, he would then have an opportunity to return to the tiger-ridden tract and initiate more ambitious measures for its extermination. The great thing was to prevent them from bolting away from their villages and this they would most certainly not do so long as there was any chance of avoiding the tiger's depredations in any other way.

'Well, here you are, Juggoo. There are five rupees for the holy man and one for yourself. See that the business is properly done because, if you don't, there will be trouble when I come back, you old scoundrel.'

The village ancient merely grinned at the threat and hobbled away in triumph to convey the glad news to his fellows. The Forest Officer called up a few of them later and found that they were absolutely confident of the success of Juggoo's proposed magic and that there was no fear of their leaving their villages until its failure was beyond all doubt. They would be unwilling to admit the miscarriage of any scheme of their own devising and so he felt confident that he need not get back to the locality for at least two or three weeks.

As he did not receive intimation of any further killings by the tiger, he eventually did not arrange to return to Juggoo's village for some six weeks. There had been no cessation of timber extractions and, so far as the reports went, the fire watchers were carrying out their work satisfactorily.

When he drew near the area of the man-eater's operations, he found a totally different state of affairs to that prevailing on his former visit. The villagers were no longer terror-stricken and seemed to have regained their usual cheery outlook on life; cattle grazed under the control of carefree youths while the lively sound of axes echoed among the hills.

His camp fire that night was again the meeting-place for the village elders who all bore a look of complete content. The aged Juggoo was beaming all over his wrinkled face and a senile chuckle came from his toothless jaws.

' I made a good arrangement, Sahib, so you need not beat me,' he said and the others grouped round the fire showed their appreciation of the old man's jest.

By dint of questioning the more intelligent members of the gathering, the Forest Officer was able to piece together what had taken place. There certainly had been two more killings by the tiger whilst the arrangements for the purchase and due enchantment of the nail were in progress but, from the day that they had got it into its position in the forest, all such unpleasant events had completely ceased ! The village was free from fear and they had been able to take up their normal daily routine without interruption.

When he heard these facts, the Forest Officer began to take a more intelligent interest in the affair than he had formerly done. Whereas on his previous visit the scheme had been to him merely a means of keeping the people happy by acquiescing in one of their superstitions, now there was the concrete fact that this apparently futile business with an iron nail had been an unqualified success. He asked for details about the size of the spike, how the holy man had enchanted it and what the villagers had done with it after it had been returned to them.

What the saint had pronounced over it in the way of incantations they said they did not know, but they told him that the nail had been about a span long, they had paid the holy man five rupees and, when they had got the nail back again from him, they had driven it into the tallest tree in the forest with their axes. They then explained that the whole idea was that just as the actual iron spike was driven into the wood, so a ' spirit nail ' of the same size would be forced through the tiger's jaws in a mysterious manner and from that moment he would be unable to bite anything.

While this seemed rather a tall story to the Forest Officer, he remembered having read of somewhat similar proceedings in medieval England by which, if a wax effigy of an enemy were pierced with pins, the original of the image would be made to suffer acute pains in his body at exactly similar places to those in which the pins had been inserted. If his own ancestors had believed in the efficacy of such a proceeding, was it a wonder that these simple savages should have confidence in a similar use of magic to defeat a bloodthirsty enemy ? It certainly appeared to have worked successfully in the present case ! The numerous killings which had taken place before the insertion of the nail

had now ceased completely for some five or six weeks and confidence had been fully restored to the previously terrified village folk. There was no doubt that his five rupees *had* been an excellent investment and that Juggoo had well earned his commission. What would not a London specialist have charged for far less successful advice ?

He went to bed feeling that one of his many worries had been lifted from his shoulders and he woke next morning in the best of spirits. That afternoon, while out in the forest, he was thinking over all that he had heard the previous night and asked one of the men with him to show him the place where the nail had been hammered in. He was taken to an open space in the middle of which stood a dead tree towering high above those in the surrounding jungle. His guides pointed upwards and there—right at the top, about 120 feet from the ground—he could just see something protruding from the loftiest branch. IT WAS THE NAIL !

But why, he asked, had they taken so much trouble to fix the spike at such a distance from the ground when they could just as well have driven it into the bole of the tree without troubling to climb it. They all looked astonished at what they evidently considered crass stupidity on the part of one whom they had previously considered possessed unusual intelligence for a white man and began to explain—as if to a young child—that it was obvious the tiger, on finding the spirit nail inconveniencing his jaws, would do his utmost to wrench from the tree the enchanted piece of iron whose counterpart was causing him to go hungry. The tiger had sufficient common sense—evidently more than the Forest Officer in *their* opinion—to know that, could he but get the nail out of that tree, his own metallic handicap would be removed at the same time. Hence every effort would be made by the ravenous animal to tear out the spike as soon as possible and the villagers, unwilling that he should recommence operations with an appetite sharpened by several days' enforced fasting, had taken good care to ensure that the nail was as secure as their exertions could make it.

In spite of the previous experiences he had had of the mysteries which lie concealed beneath the seemingly placid surface of life in India, the Forest Officer found this last explanation rather more than he was prepared to swallow and so he began to ridicule the story. Still treating him rather as one whose childish objections must be humoured with kindly patience, the forest folk led him to the base of the tree and there—clearly showing on the

bare trunk—were the fresh marks of a tiger's claws ! The hard wood had been scored and scored again up to some twelve feet from the ground and the marks were obviously something far more full of meaning than that normal claw-sharpening on trees to which all members of the cat tribe are addicted. To complete his defeat, the forest men pointed out to him that many prints of the hind paws showed unmistakably the tell-tale malformation !

' You see, Sahib, he did his best to get up the tree after that nail, but it was too much for him, so he starved to death—that is why he does not trouble us any more.'

Further argument with such firm believers seemed futile and indeed the Forest Officer himself was beginning to think that there really must have been something more than mere coincidence in such a remarkable chain of events. There were the facts, what was the explanation ?

Still somewhat unwilling to relinquish all his doubts about the matter without a further struggle, the Forest Officer, on his return to Headquarters, set on foot enquiries as to what could have happened to that particular tiger to cause the sudden cessation of human kills. From the adjoining Districts came the official information that no such tiger had been reported as having been killed during the past few months and that there had indeed been no man-eater at work in them that year.

The foregoing, which is a perfectly true story, would appear to be an interesting example of the old ' sympathetic magic ' so prevalent in the Middle Ages but now transferred to a warmer and more modern setting.

*THE SEAFARER.*

Nou that I singe  
 mi liues sang,  
 mote ic wol pleyne  
 loude ant lang ;  
 mote ic wol rimen  
 bittere roun  
 for mi loue, mi lefdige  
 Alisoun.  
 Mote ic wol tellen  
 of wateres waste,  
 ant kare that clibbed  
 to mi braste,  
 whan forth I fered  
 on wages waie,  
 walked with wealcen  
 nihte ant daie,  
 on flodwaisies far  
 to erdes ende—  
 Ant hu ic, wærig,  
 hame wold wende,  
 leofe to lagen  
 in bedde warme,  
 ræde to resten,  
 rice, in hir arme—  
 Leofe, mi lefdige,  
 softe to slepen,  
 ant to hare na mo  
 the wæge wepen.

INNES ROSE.

*JOINING THE IMMORTALS.*

BY E. H. CREBBIN.

In almost every ship afloat one finds at least one ardent disciple of Izaak Walton. He may be an officer or perhaps one of the ship's company; but to whatever station he belong, he dreams, thinks and speaks of naught but those enormous fish which, elusive and tantalising like the Eldorado of the old gold-prospectors, seem to remain for ever just out of reach.

There were in our light cruiser many fishermen, and during the foreign-service commission then coming to an end, many fresh-water fish had been killed. But, in the deep-sea line, there was one man who stood out head and shoulders above the rest.

Stoker Dodds, in his enthusiasm and devotion, was a worthy disciple; but his ways were not the ways of the man who casts a Jock Scott with the delicate touch of a great surgeon. And like many small men, Stoker Dodds brought to his sport a strain of pugnacity. The beautiful slender strength of the balanced trout rod was not for him: rather did he take from the ship's storeroom the shark-hook, for which he had indented, and loading it with a grisly looking piece of pork, attach thereto a line that would have given Izaak Walton pause for thought, for it was in its appearance more reminiscent of the main halyards of the ship's cutter than the fine masterpiece that is known as a fishing-line.

Like many another man whose one-mindedness is not understood of the people, Stoker Dodds became in due course the target of the numerous wits of the lower deck, for such tenacity of purpose is apt to provoke suspicion in lesser minds.

Often had I observed the small, tense figure standing still and silent in the waist of the ship while the rest of his watch snored in their hammocks below. In his mouth was stuck an old clay pipe, and his right hand resting on the bulwarks held loosely the hemp rope that was his 'line.' Although taciturn, he shared with many fishermen a *penchant* for quiet company. Hour after hour he would stand there. Eight bells would strike and another day be born, but Stoker Dodds still remained, until gradually he gave the im-

pression that he was growing into some permanent and slightly mysterious fitting of the upper deck.

All the quartermasters and corporals knew him well. Differently, they sometimes confided in the officer of the day as he made his rounds in the night watches, that Stoker Dodds was 'funny.' To their simple minds, a man having the morning watch was little short of daft if he went on 'fishing' over the side until two bells had struck in the middle watch. And the devotion of Stoker Dodds was all the more remarkable in that nobody ever saw him catch anything.

'Well, 'Arry, how goes it?' would come the respectful salutation of the quartermaster of the middle watch, having taken over. For it was noticeable that the older and senior ratings were disposed to accord honour to one who in spite of his 'funniness' yet possessed such marked qualities of patience and steadfastness. 'Not caught anything yet, I suppose,' the quartermaster would then add, strolling over to join the angler; and there was no question implied in the remark, rather was it in the nature of a statement, for, from long experience in harbours all over South America and other distant places, the quartermaster had long since given up hope of seeing effected the great catch of which his companion dreamed.

Bouncing the shark-hook reflectively on the bottom some thirty fathoms down, the angler would remove from his mouth the clay pipe and, with an air of portentous wisdom, frown down at the unfathomable sea from whose calm surface was reflected the glow from the gangway light near by. His dark, saturnine face perched on the stunted body lent an air of gnome-like unreality to his appearance that was enhanced by the dark brooding eyes.

'It's not,' he would at last give quiet reply, 'it's not in the act of landing a whopper that a man's uplifted. No, it's the anticipation, and—and—the quiet. You can have all yer trout fishing and salmon killing in the best rivers—not,' he would hastily add, 'that I don't see the fun in that kind of fishing for them that likes it, but here is fishing as I see it. Ye don't try to fool the fish. If he can't see that shark-hook then he deserves to be caught: ay, and if he's got a mouth that can take it, he'll probably pull me in after him.'

'Well,' said the quartermaster, not altogether converted, 'yer won't fail through lack of trying anyhow. Lor' the hours you must 'ave spent leaning over the waist there. It's a wonder the "Bloke" ain't fined you for a drum o' paint, wearing out the bulwarks as

you do. And you'll have to buck up, Harry, for we'll be paying off in a couple o' months.'

The quartermaster regarded the sombre figure with a suddenly awakened suspicion.

' You ain't, er, you 'aven't been crost in love, Harry ? ' he enquired with tentative delicacy.

The short staccato laugh was ample answer.

' Do you think the thought of some far-away bit o' skirt would get me up here night after night 'anging on to a bit o' line ? ' The angler laughed again and there was ringing scorn in his voice. Then his expression changed suddenly. His dark eyes flashed and a rapt look transfigured his countenance.

' No,' he said slowly, ' it's easy to see you'll never be a fisherman. Never know the wonderful hours that slip by in a kind of spell. Why, Nobby,' and here he coughed apologetically, ' why, sometimes I think they're the happiest hours I've ever 'ad ; just standing 'ere and thinking. It's so quiet, and the sea and the ship seem different then, just as if they, too, were stopping for a kind o' stand easy while everyone was sleeping down below.'

He fumbled for words, a puzzled look on his face, while the quartermaster's vast bovine countenance loomed out of the night like a startled moon.

' It's the quiet and the peace,' the angler strove to express the fascination of a pastime that is not easy to pin down, for it is elusive as the flight of a singèd moth. ' I likes to hear the bells strike,' he asserted, and in his voice there crept a tinge of belligerence, for, curiously enough, outside of fishing, Harry Dodds was not a patient man. Moreover, he was one of those singular people—and perhaps it is a pity there are not more—who lack the social grace of ' small talk.' ' The bells,' he repeated, ' sound more mellow in the night watches. 'Ave you ever noticed, Nobby, when you're lying in yer 'ammock below at night in the dark 'ow eerie the "Last Post" sounds as the notes of the bugle come faintly down the mess decks ? '

Nobby shook himself as if coming out of a mist. ' You've got some funny ideas, 'Arry, and no mistake,' he pronounced, not altogether approvingly. ' It's my opinion that this 'ere business of standing alone for hours with a shark-hook over the side can be overdone. Too much thinking,' enunciated the quartermaster gravely (from which fault he was obviously immune), ' is no good to anyone.' Muttering to himself, he retired to inspect the

barometer, leaving the solitary figure, strangely unmoved, to continue its placid vigil.

We were lying at anchor at St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands, a most uninteresting spot. As I came aft from my cabin eight bells were being struck. It was just midnight and I cursed the hour, for I had been hit on the inside of the knee by a fastish ball in the cricket match we had played that afternoon against the E.T.C.

As I stumbled out on to the upper deck, I heard an agonised yell from the port waist, and quickening my pace went aft to investigate.

An astounding sight met my gaze.

Half-way over the side, his figure looking more diminutive than ever and constricted into a weird shape, was the indefatigable angler, Stoker Dodds. Holding him by one leg was the corporal of the watch, while the massive arms of the quartermaster, the angler's friend, Nobby, were enveloping the whole group in the manner of an octopus.

'There's something on the line, sir,' the quartermaster wheezed gustily, 'something big what tore the line through Harry—beg your pardon, sir—Stoker Dodd's hands like it was a ton weight.'

A convulsed face peered up at me from the other side of the bulwarks, but shining through its pain there was an ethereal light of triumphant achievement.

'That's right, sir. I've hooked a big 'un just off the bottom in twenty-six fathoms.'

'But you can't stay in that position,' I objected, 'you'll fall overboard; where's the line?'

'Ere, sir,' Stoker Dodds replied, and pointed out to me a bartaut hemp rope.

'It's fair twanging like a violin string. I whipped on a couple o' turns round a cleat soon as the line was torn out of my hands. And look at it out there, sir!' he cried, pointing to where the line stood straight out like a black spear ten feet from the ship's side.

'Well, you can't all stay here like this,' I said doubtfully. 'Why not take the line to the foot of the gangway and see if you can get anything in.'

With great caution the group, reminiscent of a piece of tangled statuary, reduced itself to its component parts. The line was cast off the cleat and with Stoker Dodds in command the three men, taking the strain, led it to the foot of the gangway.

By this time I was hopelessly enmeshed in the fascination of speculating on what manner of animal lay at the business end of the line.

I joined the three men forthwith, and by some curious alchemy we four, officer of the day, quartermaster, corporal, and stoker off duty, became simply four fishermen striving to land some redoubtable quarry of the deep.

At first it was easy, for, although there was a considerable strain on the line, we hauled in hand over hand readily enough. Then suddenly there came a pull as if a picket-boat had fouled the line. The arms were nearly torn from our bodies, and inexorably, fighting every inch, we were forced to give way. The strain was such that we dared not attempt to take a turn round one of the lower platform stanchions.

Almost in the sea, a wild light in his eye, the palms of his hands raw, stood, or rather danced, Stoker Dodds; silent no longer, vociferously he cheered us on, his face a mask of determination, his glance ever quick to seize an inch here, a fathom there.

Quite soon our quarry stopped his headlong dash. But he had given us a taste of his fighting calibre.

'Heave in!' ordered Stoker Dodds, and the line came rippling through our hands.

'Ere, mate!' the quartermaster interjected with anxiety, as the surface of the water began to ripple. 'Ere, hop back off the platform grating, come up a step or two, 'e's coming to have a look at us.'

The angler glanced over his shoulder, scorn in his eye.

'Are we fishin'?' he enquired, and there was a world of irony in his voice, 'or are we attendin' a dame's school? When you go fishing, Nobby,' he explained, more in sorrow than in anger, 'you've ruddy well got to put up with the rigours of the chase.'

The corrected quartermaster clucked mournfully with his tongue.

'Gawd!' breathed Stoker Dodds suddenly, with a wild surmise apparent on his features. He pointed some twenty feet out from the ship's side.

Looking in that direction a feeling of horror crept over me and down my spine little prickles came and went. For a vast forbidding shadow, all the more menacing because its outline was nebulous, lay just under the water; and near the surface two huge sullen eyes with the immobile threat of conscious power quietly stared

out at our little party on the gangway platform, where the water lapped round our feet.

'My Gawd !' whispered the quartermaster in echo, 'what 'ave you hooked, 'Arry ?' and his voice quivered. 'Better cut it adrift,' he muttered, his hand going to his knife.

'If you do,' the little angler cried, and there was fierce reproach and anger in his strident voice, 'I'll chuck you into the "ditch" on top of it ! Cut it adrift,' he repeated. 'I always said, Nobby, you'd never make a fisherman. What say now, sir,' he asked, turning to me, 'shall we give a final heave and land him ?'

'Well,' I temporised, 'from what we've seen of him he's a nasty-looking customer. Better get a handspike or a bar of some kind to flatten him out with when he comes near.'

The enthusiasm of that little man, confound it ! had been too much for my caution. I could not have slept again that night without seeing more of our quarry.

It was just at this most inauspicious moment that the gangway light over our heads fused and there we were in darkness.

'Haul away, then !' commanded the angler, not at all perturbed by the blackness that had descended upon our activities.

Uneasily, I joined in the hauling party ; of half a mind to forbid any nearer approach of that nerve-racking eye, as big as a saucer.

'Ere he is ! He's coming !' screeched Stoker Dodds, a wild tone of triumph in his voice. 'I can see him !' he added ; 'he's only five feet away.' His voice broke off abruptly, for out of the seething water at our feet there arose a hoarse, brooding grunt. It was the forerunner of intense activity for us all, for the giant fish suddenly turned on its side and threshed the water into foaming waves.

'Hold on, hold on, take a turn, corporal !' cried Stoker Dodds, as he braced his feet against the lower stanchions.

The effort of the quarry, however, was short-lived, and soon the night was made raucous by gigantic, snoring grunts that sounded to our quickened senses somehow shocking and prehistoric, as they reverberated across the quiet waters.

How we ever got that huge mass up the accommodation ladder I don't quite know. It was too dark to see anything but a pair of large threatening eyes that glared at us with an inhuman expression. Had it been light, I for one would probably have dropped the line and fled.

At long last, with a mighty heave, we hauled and cast the fish over the upper gangway platform on to the upper deck. It was

now in the circle of light from the quartermaster's shelter, and with one accord we all stepped back—and we wasted no time doing so, for the catch far exceeded the expectations even of Stoker Dodds.

It was a giant ray.

As it doubled its large flat body with crackling slaps on the deck we were vouchsafed a good view of a mouth underslung like a shark's and furnished with a set of the most wicked and powerful-looking teeth I have ever seen in a fish. It had taken the shark-hook into that capacious cavern with an ease that even a shark would have envied. As I recollect that Stoker Dodds had been hauling away merrily all the way up the gangway with his hands not six inches away from that terrible array of ingrowing tusks, a cold shiver ran down my spine. But the prehistoric-looking catch was furnished with another even more formidable weapon, and it was principally because of this latter danger that we had all leapt back out of range.

The ray had a tail—not some quiet, furry, elegant-looking tail like that of a cat or some small species of monkey—but a grisly, hard, solid piece of whalebone which, flat and broad at its base, gradually tapered out to a point. And the sides of this terrible weapon were edged like a two-bladed sword. All the strength of that flat heavy body seemed to be centred into the flailing blows of this horrible appendage. Later, when I examined the gangway under the rays of the electric light, I discovered one solid brass stanchion which carried grooves a quarter of an inch deep where the beast had struck it with its tail.

Like many fish, it was possessed of incredible vitality. It slapped the deck continually, all the while threshing its five-feet long tail in mighty flails that, whistling through the air, caused close approach to be a matter of difficulty and danger, for one of those blows landing full on a limb would probably have cut through flesh and bone like a parted wire hawser.

By this time, notwithstanding the hour, a small crowd had gathered round, drawn by the certainty that something memorable had occurred. One of the onlookers, luckily enough, was the ship's butcher, and it was he who rushed in and despatched the giant ray with the largest axe he could find.

A strange silence fell upon the upper deck; and after the heavy, booming grunts which had been filling the air, this was a great relief, for there was something incongruous and out of place in the noise this animal had made lying there on the trim upper deck of

our ship. It was as if some creature of a nightmare had suddenly stepped forward out of the shadows and assumed the mantle of a horrible flesh.

As for size, it was big enough. Its body alone was of about the same area as that of a fair-sized dining-room table.

The small crowd of men attired in their night clothing regarded the beast with unconcealed awe ; their wondering glances measured with critical gaze first the fabulous fish, and then its captor—small, puny and still somewhat dazed as he stood like an apologetic Perseus by the battered head of his catch. The wits in the party, whose habit it had been to direct their shafts at this easy target, folded up their tents and stole silently away, for they had the sense to realise that from that moment the reputation of Stoker Dodds was raised to the heights for all time. His was the rôle of persecuted ‘medicine man’ who had delivered the goods—and what goods ! Henceforward, their puny levity would glance off the mountain, for at one fell swoop Stoker Dodds, the quiet, unassuming little stoker, had joined the immortals. Already, ten minutes after the catch had been safely landed, mysterious voices were speaking on the mess deck : hastily awakened messmates listened awe-struck to the news :

‘ You know Harry Dodds, ’im what spends the evenings fishing with a shark-hook over the side ? Well, ’e’s just landed a ruddy devil-fish which reaches from the gangway to the quartermaster’s shelter. Fair beats me ’ow the little cuss did it. Single-handed, too, they say. Who’d ’a’ thought it. Fair knock-out, I should say . . . ’

The language was freer English than the above, for the situation demanded strong and picturesque setting, but briefly that was the gist of it. And already, let it be noted, the lower deck, whose praise when it is deserved is accorded without stint, was disposed to credit the angler with a single-handed capture, and who shall say but that their feeling for the right rounding off of an heroic saga was not in the best of romantic strains ?

‘ Well,’ said I, finally, on the upper deck, breaking uneasily into the rapt transfiguration of the hero, ‘ we’ll have to do something about this fish of yours, Stoker Dodds. We can’t leave it sculling about the upper deck. As the butcher is present, I suggest you get your devil-fish triced up and weighed and measured, so that you’ll have a record of him fresh from the sea.’

My suggestion was carried out. A party hauled the gruesome

beast aft to the butcher's screen, but Stoker Dodds was not one of them. With the extraordinary sense of fitness that is such a marked characteristic of the 'British Blue' he was deputed to escort the party in dignified aloofness, for his was the rôle of great hunter whose work is finished when the quarry is killed.

It was an impressive scene ; and one could not but reflect that man, the essential, fundamental man, remains unchanged through the centuries, for in just such a similar manner did the cavemen issue forth and with suitable jubilation drag off to the larder the spoils of the chase.

The catch was triced up ; and as far as my memory serves me, scaled some 222 pounds, while his overall length was in the neighbourhood of eleven feet.

He looked a fearsome beast, stretching high into the air, the under side of his belly gleaming dull-white in the light.

A quarter of an hour later, the night-birds, including the angler, were all turned in and I was making my way for'ard to my cabin. Turning at the break of the fo'c'sle, I could just see, aft, the vast outline of our weird fish swinging gently in the night breeze and looking for all the world like some huge dirty sheet slung negligently in the rigging.

The next day I learnt to my surprise that the unpromising-looking exterior covered a tender flesh that, in the guise of countless fish-steaks, had been eaten with relish all along the mess decks, thus adding further laurels to the brow of Stoker Dodds, for as all the world knows it is one thing to bring down some mighty game but quite another to select a bizarre animal that passes with high honour the acid test of the cooking-pot.

It was many years later when travelling down to Devonport that I walked along the corridor of my train and paused near the open door of a carriage which contained some stokers and seamen.

As I looked out at the red cliffs of Dawlish, a voice whose tones seemed faintly familiar came clearly to my ears.

'Ave you ever met Stoker Dodds,' the voice was saying, "'im that landed single-handed a fighting devil-fish at St. Vincent in the Verdes ?' The speaker paused to allow the magnitude of the achievement to sink in, then, obviously gratified by its effect on his audience, he continued : 'Gor' lumme, that was a night. I was quarterbloke of the middle . . . '

Eagerly and picturesquely the hoarse voice told the story, while at the open window—Dawlish now far astern—I still lingered on.

'Of course,' the speaker impressed on his spellbound audience, 'the corporal and I lent 'im a hand, but what we did was nothing. Rightly speaking, you could say as 'e landed that there fish over fifteen feet long bang on the upper deck all by 'isself: and 'im only a little 'un.'

'Lumme!' a voice interjected, "'e must 'ave been a regular Hackendschmidt.'

'E was that!' the narrator confirmed proudly. 'He had the figger of a pocket 'Ercules. And him what 'ad fished nearly all the commission and nary a bite.'

'Ah, Nobby, it's often that way with fishing,' a deep bass voice enunciated with feeling.

'And 'ere's another thing,' Nobby said excitedly, 'Jimmy the One, who was orficer of the day—when he saw this horrible fish from the gangway—was all for a cuttin' the line and letting 'im go. Gor', you should 'ave 'eard 'Arry Dodds, what 'e said under his breath would 'ave melted ice!'

At the open window I pricked up burning ears. 'Alas!' I reflected sadly, 'as in these modern days of the cinema-world, it is the star who counts. To him all the honour and glory, and to the lesser satellites—oblivion or worse.'

'But 'ere's the funniest thing of the lot.' Nobby cleared his throat with *empressement*, and apparently leant forward, for when he spoke again his voice was pitched in a low, husky whisper which lent a conspiratorial flavour to his delivery.

'Yus,' he said slowly (and it was all I could do to hear him). 'Yus, the next day when 'Arry was being feted all along the mess decks, 'e come to me with a funny look in his eye.

"Nobby," 'e says, "don't you never tell anyone aboard this ship, but a funny thing has happened. When I goes down to me mess after landing that there devil-fish, what do I find but the pound of pork that was on the 'ook."

"Ay," he says, looking at me meaningly, "I never 'ad no bait on the 'ook and 'twas the only time I ever forgot."

*MIDNIGHT MATINÉE.**A CONCERT IN CONNAUGHT.*

BY K. DEW.

CONNAUGHT is admittedly the wildest part of Ireland. Is not the phrase 'to Hell or Connaught' common throughout the country? Those who work her stony fields still find it as full of bitter truth as the settlers who, hundreds of years before King James's officers coined the phrase, were pushed back to these harsh lands by stronger Irish chieftains.

Places of amusements and social gatherings are rare indeed. Even the ubiquitous race meetings are few and far between. Certainly Achill Island, that most westerly bit of Connaught, was the last place where we had expected to be entertained by a public show.

As we walked across the island in the evening light Clew Bay looked remote and ghostly, the sea hidden by a belt of mist that left the tops of its countless islands visible. We were glad to turn towards Blacksod, looking warm and comforting under the setting sun. Then it was that we saw the surprising announcement. Stuck on a wooden post by the roadside was a flaring orange poster advertising the 'Nix Concert Party' who would be performing nightly for a week. This was followed by a list of the plays to be produced.

The very appearance of the poster was unexpected, for the countryside in Ireland is singularly free from advertisements, the few that there are being generally shipping and emigration notices or race-meeting dates. That a concert party should come to this out-of-the-way corner of the world was indeed surprising. Full of eagerness we read it through. There was no indication as to where the performances would take place, but we did discover to our chagrin that it was dated early in May and now it was the middle of June. We had already missed two race meetings by a few days and were, it seemed, to be disappointed of this rare chance. But we had forgotten that one can never foretell what will happen in Ireland except that it is always the unexpected.

No sooner had we set foot in the little hamlet where we were staying than the postmistress hurried out to ask if we were going to the concert. We told her we had seen the poster but thought that the party had come a month ago. No, they were there that week.

(One set of posters evidently did duty for the season.) But where was it being held and what time did it begin, for it was already nearly nine o'clock ?

' Oh ! it's in the gerege up the road. They'll wait for the crowd to collect. Will ye be going ? '

Certainly we would go if we could arrange matters at the inn. The postmistress waved aside any such obstacles and in fact we found that the landlord highly approved of the idea. He spoke of two other guests who thought of going but found that they were out fishing instead, and finally told us that if he was not up when we came home we should find our candles just inside the doorway, and would we lock up ?

Shortly after ten o'clock we set off. We had seen no garage, but since there was but the one road we could not miss the way. At the top of the hill, by a cluster of cottages, about a dozen people stood talking. Was this the crowd ? A woman leaning over a gate wished us good-evening. We asked her if she could tell us where the concert was being held, and with the utmost friendliness and courtesy she immediately constituted herself our chaperone for the night.

The barn-like building adjoining her house was the ' gerege ' which the children had persuaded her husband to let the concert party use, for there was no other suitable building in the place. They were giving ' Madame X ' to-night and we learned that the performance would be in English. To our question as to whether we ought not to be going in came the same reply. ' No hurry, wait until the crowd collects. They don't like going in until it is dark.'

At half-past eleven the sound of a fiddle from the barn was taken as the signal to enter. The building may have been known locally as ' the gerege,' and a car may have been regularly housed there, but the strong smell of horse manure that met us on the threshold left us in no doubt as to its real purpose. When pipes and cigarettes were lit the smell altered, but even the strongest of tobaccos could not always overcome the stable odour that blew towards us in a sudden draught of air.

A house which was being built close to the shed had conveniently supplied the planks and trestles which served as seats. A few padded cushions from a jaunting car, placed over a plank, formed the seat of honour. The stage was hidden by a drop curtain, whereon a lighthouse, seemingly suspended from the sky, threw a gleam of light over a raging sea.

In a corner by the stage sat the band consisting of a pianist and fiddler, both young men who played well. The fiddler we were told might have gone far if he had not been so fond of the 'dhrink.' He was known all over the country and had formerly played much in Dublin and Cork. We were reminded of Blind Raftery's poem :

'Behold me now,  
And my face to the wall,  
A-playing music  
Unto empty pockets.'

The piano had been lent to them. They used to take their own with them from place to place, but found this so expensive that on their last visit to Achill it had been raffled at the end of their stay and had realised £10.

All this was told us by our friendly hostess, who imparted it with that wealth of vocabulary which amazes so many visitors to Ireland.

With the raising of the curtain the footlights were revealed in all their glory. A row of six or eight carriage lamps placed along the edge of the platform which the front row of the audience looked after when any strong puff of air set them smoking. A few more lamps at different parts of the stage gave all the additional lighting that was required.

In true concert-party style the performance opened with a chorus, followed by one or two songs and a comic sketch; finally, shortly after midnight came the grand event, 'Madame X.'

The seats were filled by now and at the back one or two men were standing. At such a gathering in England there would have been the sound of heavy hob-nailed boots scraping on rough timber, the deep gruff voices of men and the shriller voices of women, and now and then a hearty laugh at some good jest. But to the majority of this audience footwear was a luxury and though most of them were shod for the occasion, boots and shoes must be treated reverently and not used to scrape and kick haphazard. The soft musical voices scarcely rose above a whisper and in no way disturbed the quietness. There was over all an air of expectancy, as though they waited for great things, yet without hope. In the wavering light of the carriage lamps, or the spurt of a lighted match we saw their faces. The children unbelievably beautiful and shy as startled does. The women looked worn and dispirited, but the men burned with a hungry fire. Everywhere deep-set eyes, dark in the flickering light, lean faces, and on all the stamp of their race, the fierce joy of Celtic misery.

A man came and stood beside the woman next to us. She looked up and in her slow quiet voice asked him, 'Will ye no' be sitting?' But he shook his head, spoke a few words to her, then went out. We asked if we could not make room for him, but she said, no, he was not staying, he just came to tell her the tide would be right at four o'clock and he would be going out to the ship in the bay. This ship, we learned, brought stores to the little community, but could only come close inshore to unload at certain states of the tide.

The curtain rose on '*Madame X.*' The opening songs and sketch had been mediocre, one or two had won a fair amount of applause, but it had not been very enthusiastic, although the audience was quite polite. But with the prospect of serious acting their manner changed. Here was an art they understood, expressing itself in a form dear to them. The play had of necessity been cut considerably, but nothing vital to the story had been omitted and the actors rose splendidly to the occasion. The tale that might so easily have seemed nothing but third-rate melodrama acquired, in that primitive setting, a reality and force that no modern theatre staging could give it.

We stole a glance at those around us. With grave intentness all watched the players. These were no far-fetched passions they dealt in. *Madame X* treading the unfamiliar streets of Paris, cold, hungry and alone, was a tale told by an Irish emigrant, and when she was denied the sight of her son the sorrow of all Ireland was upon us. It reached us, a mournful sigh, like the 'sharp wind that ruffles all day long, a little bitter pool about a stone on the bare coast.' Men, women and children, it rose alike from all, for there was not one there but knew the pain of separation and denial that exile imposes. But now *Madame X*'s son is making his speech for the defence and the men's eyes sparkle as they listen to the flow of words. What Irishman does not love the ring of words? These born orators judged critically and when the curtain fell there was that silence that the true artist glories in before the applause broke out long and sincere. But it was never tumultuous, for all the melancholy of their race was stirred.

A few minutes later, however, their gaiety broke through when they were invited to take part in a raffle. Twopence a ticket, the prize a ten-shilling note. With this sporting offer disposed of, we stepped out into a countryside which already showed grey in the dawn, and so to bed by candlelight.

## FIFTY POUNDS.

BY GEOFFREY DEARMER.

THE man who first talked about the depths of depression knew his business. At least so Henry was thinking as he sat behind an empty row of deck-chairs and stared at a sullen, oily sea. He needed fifty pounds. With fifty pounds in his pocket he could accept that three years' choir scholarship which his boy Jim had won. As things were he would have to refuse.

'I'd do anything, I'd *steal* for Jim if it wasn't for the danger of being caught,' he said to himself as he sank deeper into his turned-up, unnecessary raincoat and stared at the uselessly heaving sea. What a way to spend Saturday afternoon! What a futile waste of time! He closed his eyes. The sea wasn't so bad when you didn't look at it. The waves made a not unpleasant seething noise as they dragged the smooth shingle back and then threw themselves half-heartedly forward again. *Flamp-flump* they went rhythmically, waves tethered to the ocean, spent waves slapping the shore; silly, futile, feckless waves that hissed with bad temper and went on obstinately trying to get there. 'Rather like me,' thought Henry as he dozed off.

He woke to find himself listening in to a very private conversation. At least it ought to have been very private. Not that 'conversation' was quite the word, since the man directly in front of him was doing the listening, punctuating the other's flow of narrative with 'Lords' and 'You-don't-says' and 'Go-on' and 'I can't-say-I-blame-you' and other phrases of simulative appreciation. And he wasn't merely being polite either, was the listener. Henry could tell that by his voice. He was listening *admiringly*. Henry could just see the tip of the narrator's grey, pointed beard wagging as the account progressed.

Henry, like the vast majority of normally curious people, found other people's conversations supremely interesting. There was all the fun of guessing what people were talking about and gauging the probable lines of development. Henry, who travelled to and from his London office every day in a bus with 'Potters Bar' on its front, had become quite expert. In his experience the most popular topics were horses and the dogs, with the theatre as a bad third; not

counting topics labelled ‘private’ of course. The most spritely of these were records of other conversations, generally on the triangular ‘he says to her and I says to both of them’ model, with the speaker as the hero of the piece. Elderly parsons, he noticed, generally talked about sick or feeble friends, and the betting was not more than a hundred to one against the average stalwart spinster observing with rather wistful disapprobation that Ada was in trouble again.

The owner of the wagging beard, whom Henry privately christened Captain Cuttle, went on talking.

‘S’remarkable, very,’ said his companion.

‘I don’t know who the fellow is, what he’s like, whether he’s married to her or not—pray God that be the case. But I haven’t seen her from that day.’

‘Aye,’ said the other fervently.

‘I’d rather take her back than have her live in mortal sin,’ said Cuttle dutifully.

‘Best leave well alone.’

‘In the face of mortal sin I don’t know that I should, Jim. My conscience has troubled me more than once these last two years. If she’s gone with a married man, should I not denounce her from the pulpit lest others fall into the nethermost pit? It would be my duty, Jim.’

‘Twould that,’ said Jim, sucking his teeth.

Captain Cuttle sighed deeply. Obviously he would have done this duty without reluctance.

‘Ebenezer Posthlewaite lost his daughter that way,’ Jim mused, staring at a lobster-pot. ‘He got up in the Tabernacle and turned the light on ‘er, and she were scarlet. She came back next day and saved her soul alive.’

‘I know,’ Cuttle admitted indiscreetly. ‘But a daughter’s a daughter and a wife’s a wife,’ he added hurriedly.

Henry composed his features with some difficulty and closed his eyes as the two men got up and moved away.

He pigeonholed the conversation in his mind. It was, he thought, a gem; one of the best in his collection.

The next day was fine. Henry, as he stood in the porch of his lodging, reflected that he might have done worse than choose Shoremouth for his fortnight’s holiday. Susan, his wife, was of the opinion that he could not have done better, but then Susan was a pearl amongst women, a non-grumbler, a tongue-holder; a woman

of the world in spite of the fact that she had never left the shores of England except while bathing.

Henry went out to get his hair cut. He walked into the saloon and, finding the barber already occupied, was on the point of walking out when he noticed with a start of pleasurable recognition that Captain Cuttle was seated in the chair having his beard trimmed. The sight immediately revived Henry's interest in the day before. Here was a chance, and a golden one, of finding out more about the man who had lost his wife (Henry rightly guessed that she was his wife) and didn't much want to find her. Well, if Providence required Henry to shadow Cuttle he would shadow Cuttle and do it like the best of divorce detectives. He hid behind his *Trumpet* while the scissors snipped and the barber and his client learnedly discussed tomatoes.

Henry was pleased with himself as he tipped the barber and left the shop. He really hadn't done it at all badly. Cleverly he had led the conversation from his own thinning hair to beards, and from beards to Captain Cuttle and how nice and neat a beard was when properly trimmed. Henry said, with truth, that he had seen 'that fellow' before, and the barber, rising happily to the surface of small talk, took the fly at once. His name was Cartwright and he was a citizen of Shoremouth (and a citizen of no mean city, said Henry, striking the Biblical note). Cartwright was even more, he was Pastor of the Burning Bush—what! hadn't Henry heard of the Burning Bush? If Henry wanted to know what he was in for if he didn't repent, he had better visit the B.B. Tabernacle in George Street on Sunday evening and find out. Was Mr. Cartwright married? Well, strictly speaking, Mr. Cartwright was a grass widower. Mrs. Cartwright had left him two years ago and never looked back. Henry became inventive. He had, he alleged, known a tall, dark woman named Mary Cartwright—but here the barber was sorry to disappoint him. Mrs. Cartwright was short and fair, her name was Belle; she was 'fligthy'; she had 'shot the moon on a Sunday too' without so much as slipping a note into Mr. Cartwright's Bible. Belle had not bolted with a Shoremouth man, that much was certain, for both Mr. Pugh, the estate agent's clerk, and Miss Antrobus, his fiancée, had seen her taken up by a luggage-laden car at a place called Bulls Cross on the night since when she had not been seen. The barber had known Belle Cartwright professionally 'and we barbers get to know a thing or two,' he said. She was a funny woman. She would come in of a Thursday and

have her 'air waved regardless and then go bathing on the following day without so much as a postage stamp on 'er 'ead. The barber did not think she had ever really liked Mr. Cartwright very much, but her father had, as you might say, put the match to the Burning Bush at Bognor 'bout ten years ago and that was how Belle and Mr. Cartwright had fallen in with each other. Belle's father, Samuel T. Heslop, had money, Mr. Cartwright had no money. Moreover, Mr. Cartwright was travelling in rubber sea-wear during the wet summer of '31 and was feeling the pinch. He was down, was Bill Cartwright, at that time, and easy to pick up. Belle married him to get away from home not knowing that Cartwright, too, was a secret Bible-puncher.

Henry was so amused by this account that when he got home he noted the salient points about Belle in his diary. In justice to Henry it should here be stated that he had no ulterior motive in so doing. He kept a diary for the best of possible reasons, namely to remind himself of happy interviews and happier eavesdroppings. And the next evening, being Sunday, he went to the Burning Bush Tabernacle. Again his motive was no worse than curiosity. If anyone had told Henry of the sin he was going to commit he would not have bothered to be even indignant, so absurd would the suggestion have sounded. And indeed the Devil must have had a hard task to prepare the ground. For notwithstanding the fact that the Devil's cap is more crowded with feathers than the path to his paradise is with good intentions, Henry was a difficult bird to pluck.

That evening Cartwright was certainly very rude indeed to Satan. He said things in his sermon that would have made any fair-minded man put in a word in the Devil's defence. The abuse irritated Henry, but what really got him—or to be accurate caused the Devil to get him—was the sheer impotence of the Sinner when sufficiently miserable. Once well in the Pit, Pastor Cartwright implied that there was no climbing out on any sort of reasonable terms. The preacher waxed scornful about those sinners who pawn their souls on Saturday night fondly imagining that a hymn or two and a threepenny bit on Sunday were all they had pledged them for. No, the Devil was no mean opponent. . . .

He certainly was not. Henry's mood of irritability changed to one of unconscious awe. He had never listened to such a tribute. Obviously, if you were human, the Devil was positively irresistible. Easy enough for David to cope with an ass like Goliath, but Satan was not an enormous, stationary, bovine target, but an

all-black warrior who slipped in like a thief in the night, pitch-fork and all, trailing murky clouds of temptation. ‘He knows your particular weakness,’ said the preacher, glaring at his flock. Precisely, one had no chance at all. Better yield at once, take the cash (if cash it was) and let the credit go.

At this point Henry’s humour reasserted itself and he was doomed. The Devil, sitting on the very Bible that the preacher was punching, chuckled as he slipped the idea into Henry’s mind. Henry made no attempt to resist, and when the time came for Confessions he was the first to leap to his feet and falsely confess a series of undoubtedly mortal sins. The effect was terrific. Eyes boggled and goggled, jaws dropped, backs stiffened, hands clenched. Henry leapt into immediate prominence with his exordium. He had, it appeared, broken three commandments straight off the reel. He had smashed in the Tenth by coveting his neighbour’s wife and laid out the Fourth and Eighth at one blow by stealing her on a Sunday.

The congregation gasped with undisguised admiration. Somebody whistled. That whistle nearly cost Henry fifty pounds, although he didn’t know it at the time, for any idea of blackmailing Cartwright, which is what in effect he eventually did, was not in his mind. It nearly cost Henry this sum because he very nearly giggled and a hoaxter who giggles is as self-confessed as any schoolboy a shade too pleased with his own inventiveness. Henry had to remind himself that he hated Cartwright.

‘Not content with this—wretched man that I was,’ continued Henry, a note of real achievement creeping into his voice, ‘not content with breaking three commandments, not to mention breaking up a happy home, I should be failing in my duty were I not to confess that I, on that night of sin and shame, broke the Sev——’

But this was really going too far. Cartwright rose from his seat on the platform. ‘Brother, you forget yourself,’ he cried.

A gasp of infuriated annoyance escaped from the congregation. Never before in the history of the Burning Bush had a confessor been interrupted.

‘There are young persons present,’ said the preacher very properly.

‘On behalf of the young persons present, I protest,’ came a voice from the back of the hall.

Henry was conscious of what can only be described as a silent roar of approval at these words. A fat man was on his feet. ‘I

think we should allow the penitent to continue. We are concerned with a mortal soul, a soul that may yet be rescued. I think we can rely on our new brother not to outrage the susceptibilities of the young people present,' he said unctuously to an irreverently audible chorus of 'Certainly,' 'Yes, indeed,' 'Quite so' and other spontaneous terms of approval.

But Cartwright had seen something that no other eyes in that large hall had seen and he had his own private reasons for saying adamantly, 'I cannot allow this confession to continue in public. Will the confessor please come to me afterwards? We will now sing "Rock of Ages."

And so they did and the offertory, which was taken during a listless rendering of this famous hymn, broke the then existing Burning Bush low record.

Henry, by the end of the hymn, had no intention of continuing his confession in camera. He had acted impulsively, foolishly. It had been rather fun to create a diversion, but somehow it hadn't come off in the way he had intended. Henry had meant it to be immediately obvious to the congregation in general that he violently disapproved of Cartwright and his methods and that he was getting at the Pastor, pulling his leg in fact. He had realised that the attempt might be unpopular, but he hadn't thought to be misunderstood. Why, the gaping idiots had swallowed every word! It hadn't even occurred to them that he was pretending to be the man who had bolted with Belle!

Henry began by overrating and reacted to underrating the worshippers at the Burning Bush Tabernacle. He should undoubtedly have guessed that a hymn takes some little time to sing and have slipped out before it was over. Everything pointed to a wise, if undignified, retreat at this point. The hymn proceeded, the harmonium dragging woefully in its wake. But everybody's thoughts were elsewhere. An increasing number of the congregation began to put two and two together. By the time the hymn was over quite half of them were firmly convinced that Henry, and no other, was the man who had bolted with Belle. The confessor had begun his confession and had been invited to continue it in camera. Very well, continue it he should, or quite two dozen Shoremouth men and women would know the reason why. At the close of the service Henry found his exit home effectually barricaded. He was hurried round to a sort of vestry and practically pushed in.

Finding himself in the presence of Pastor Cartwright he deter-

mined to bluff it out. He would pretend that he had no intention of making a private confession. He didn't approve of them. He had thought to share his burden with his brethren, to show frankly and publicly that even such a miserable sinner as he was not irredeemable. He expected a chilly reception from Cartwright and was completely nonplussed when the Pastor benevolently offered him a seat.

'So you're the man,' said Cartwright.

This was absurd. Cartwright could surely not be such a fool as to imagine that what Henry had 'confessed' pointed to any such fact even if it were true which no sane man—

'I know, I saw,' continued Cartwright. He became matter of fact, business-like. 'I'll be frank with you,' he said, 'I don't know your name, I don't want to. If you and—er—your wife will leave Shoremouth to-morrow and say nothing to a living soul, I'll give you fifty pounds. What do you say ?'

'Well——' said Henry, swallowing with difficulty.

'That's settled then. Mind, I don't want to see either you again or Her. You quite understand ?'

'Well, of course,' said Henry, more mystified than ever.

Cartwright opened a drawer and took out a cheque-book.

'Here's a post-dated cheque. Keep away and it'll go through. But if you turn up here again or try to dun me for more—well, blackmail's an ugly word, you know. Good evening.'

Henry walked into the street like one in a dream.

What seemed like the entire congregation was waiting for him. He had some difficulty in shaking off certain of the more inquisitive members. But he succeeded, and walking off rapidly in the direction opposite to his lodgings, ultimately reached home by a roundabout route.

His wife was waiting for him.

'You didn't see me right at the back of the hall,' she said.

'Were you there ?' said Henry, by this time immune to surprise.

'Yes, I was. I turned up and saw Bill Cartwright, what's more he saw me. I only just got there in time. You see, Henry, Belle and I were great friends once and are good friends still. When she ran off with a nice young man in corsets—I mean the line—she knew Bill would never divorce her so I offered to see him and say she wasn't coming back. And I did.'

'But how did Cartwright mistake me for this corset fellow ?'

'I'm coming to that. You see Bill wanted to know what he was like, very keen was Bill. I didn't like to disappoint him, especially

as he was taking it all so well. And as you and I were courting at the time and I happened to have a photo of you in my pocket, I showed it Bill and he thought you were the corset chap. So, of course, when you got up and he saw me at the back of the hall, he thought we meant business. But I never thought you'd go and do it on your own like that, Henry, without knowing all I knew. I *was* pleased. I should never have turned up this evening if I hadn't found your diary lying about with those notes about Cartwright and Belle in it. Forgotten all about him I had. And now come upstairs and help me finish packing, there's a dear.'

*WAKEFUL I LIE . . .*

WAKEFUL I lie and watch the gambollings  
Of countless sheep.  
Why should I try to count the gentle things  
And thus court sleep ?  
Why ? For their gentle sport doth greatly please  
The idle shepherd of such flocks as these.

Such playful flocks are little thoughts and gay  
That darkness brings  
From Day's stern fold on happy holiday,—  
Such soft sweet things !  
Too soon they weary of their sport, and sleep  
Comes gently to the Shepherd and his Sheep.

ETHEL TALBOT.

*DESERT IDYLLS.**I. LIBYAN MEMORIES.*

BY MAJOR C. S. JARVIS.

*"A skull beneath a sand-hill and a viper coiled inside,  
And a red wind out of Libya roaring : 'Run and hide !'"*

RUDYARD KIPLING.

My first introduction to Libya occurred in 1916 when various oddments of troops gleaned from Egypt and the Canal Zone were hurried out into the desert west of Alexandria to hold back the Senussi Arabs who were about to invade the Nile Valley from Tripoli. There was some fighting in the neighbourhood of Mersa Matruh, including a spectacular charge by the Dorset Yeomanry ; and in a month or so hostilities were over and the Senussi, having learned from bitter experience that British troops—even newly-enlisted, second-line Territorials—were a very different proposition from the Italian conscripts with whom they had been engaged for three years, retired beyond the frontier at Sollum, leaving behind a few rather miserable specimens of their irregular soldiery in the three big oases of the Libyan Desert—Siwa, Dakhla, and Baharia. In some respects this was the most successful strategical move made by our enemies of the whole War, for these odd thousand rather verminous Arabs tied up on the Western Frontier for over a year some 20,000 troops badly required elsewhere and caused us to expend on desert railways, desert cars, transport, etc., sufficient to add 2d. to the income tax for the lifetime of the present generation.

It is very difficult to decide now who actually was to blame for this state of affairs—probably the Intelligence Department in the first place, as they imbued the soldiers with the idea that if the Senussi penetrated to the Nile Valley the whole of Egypt would rise in a holy war against us, which, to say the least, was a gross and absurd exaggeration. The soldiery also were to blame as many of the senior officers, realising their own limitations, were fully aware that the ‘bowler hat’ awaited them immediately they were given an opportunity of proving their worth or otherwise and were quick to grasp the fact that here was a war in which no bricks could be dropped, for the very simple reason that no enemy existed. As some of them had already received ‘bowlers’ in France and Sinai, and as a ‘bar to a bowler’ meant a hurried

return to England on a recruiting job, it was in their interests that the war in the Libyan Desert should be fostered at all costs.

For months our troops remained facing a perfectly empty desert absolutely devoid of water in which the enemy could not move if he so desired, and they continued to do so till at last the authorities decided very regretfully that the Senussi was a myth. As a nation we dearly love the bogey of a fanatical army of millions of desert Arabs yelling 'Allah' and putting infidels to the sword, and I imagine the idea must have started about the eleventh century during the First Crusade.

My first job was to take over the perimeter round Matruh and, being thoroughly imbued myself with the idea of a desert full of savage swordsmen and redoubtable marksmen, I crawled round the trenches peering through O.P.'s and keeping my head well down. The desert looked extremely flat and lifeless, but you never know with these Arab marksmen. Stringent orders were given that no man was to expose himself, but after awhile the absurdity of the whole business became evident—in two days we were riding out from the perimeter for long evening exercises and a week later we shot quail in a wadi in which 20,000 of the enemy were reported to be assembling. The truth of the matter was that the Arab is a very conscientious man and certain selected members of the Libyan tribes being in receipt of most handsome salaries—wealth beyond the dreams of avarice—to act as Secret Service agents, they had to do something about it. It would be definitely dishonest to come in and draw a ten-pound note and report no enemy, so the supply of Senussi armies never failed—so long as the payment was forthcoming.

Attached to us at Mersa Matruh was a section of Light Car Patrols—an offshoot of the Machine Gun Corps—which had been hastily recruited for this special war from any available material—Yeomen, Dominion troops, and Territorials. They were a most redoubtable crowd and in their box Fords, vulgarly called 'Flying Bedsteads,' they scoured every corner of the desert, reporting with monotonous regularity 'no enemy in sight,' but as they were novices to the country they of course could not be believed when the evidence was stoutly refuted by those in a position to know. The only interesting thing I did during my short stay at Mersa Matruh was to accompany a desert patrol on an attempt to find a route through from two separate roads leading to Siwa, and to place on the map the position of the mysterious Gebel Iskander

(Mount Alexander) which had never been seen by a European, but which was supposed to exist in the particularly desolate country north of Siwa. The place was of interest as it was to the top of this Mount that Alexander the Great climbed when he was lost in the desert on his way to Siwa Oasis to consult the oracle of Jupiter Ammon which in those days was considered to be in a position to give real reliable 'stable' information. Alexander at this time was doubtful about his future and such was his faith in the Oracle that he undertook this desert journey, which in the b.c.'s was a very considerable undertaking. His caravan lost its way and history relates that at the last gasp he climbed Gebel Iskander, hoping to see Siwa. This was impossible, but he put up a crow on the top of the mountain which flew off in a south-westerly direction. Alexander decided to follow it and ultimately arrived at Siwa, where he got a most satisfactory forecast of his future from the Oracle.

In the light of recent motor-car exploration in the Libyan Desert, our patrol across this particular piece of country in 1917 is nothing to talk about, but in those days, with only the old-fashioned Ford as our means of transport and with merely the vaguest knowledge of the desert, coupled with the fact that possibly the Intelligence reports might be true and we should run into a horde of the enemy, the trek had a certain element of risk about it.

We started off from Mersa Matruh shortly after dawn on a cold, brisk morning in March and by evening had travelled 120 miles south on the Siwa road and then westward down a steep escarpment to the lower levels of a vast canyon-like stretch of country. The going below was indescribably bad, being what the Arabs call *shabak* (net) desert, i.e. a network of sharp limestone ridges flush with the surface and with the hollows in between filled with the finest limestone powder. This is the worst type of going one can find in the desert as it has a most disintegrating effect on the tyres, whilst the clouds of powder that arise whenever the car lurches off a limestone outcrop into a pocket of the stuff fill the eyes, nose, and mouth and add to the natural thirst one feels from the dry desert air. There was also the rather uncomfortable feeling—having descended some 500 feet down a sandy slope to the bottom of the canyon would we ever be able to find a way up again to the high plateau and safety? The prospect of death from thirst in a harsh and waterless desert is not a pleasant one. Since then I have spent so much of my time in the deserts that I have forgotten the awe that one experiences on first seeing the

vast stretch of empty country on all sides—the wonder of the scenery at dawn and sunset when the slanting light reveals the features of crag and escarpment in shades of mauve and purple—and last but not least the uneasy realisation at the back of one's mind that if anything should go wrong with the cars, petrol, or water, one's chances of escape were slim indeed.

The following day we found Gebel Iskander—an imposing limestone massif rising some 700 feet from the floor of the canyon. From the top one looked out across a harsh and forbidding stretch of truly frightening desert shimmering in the heat haze of noon and one could understand Alexander the Great feeling appalled at the prospect. We also flushed his crow, which happened to be a raven and which, according to custom, flew off in a south-westerly direction towards Siwa, and as it was the first bird we had seen since entering the canyon we wondered if it were a direct descendant of Alexander's 'crow.'

The following day we had a truly nerve-racking time trying to find a way up out of the depression and, having essayed an ascent to the east and north without discovering any route in any way possible, we camped that night with the creepy feeling that if no track were found on the morrow both petrol and water would run out and our prospects of getting back alive were by no means bright. The day after, however, we discovered a sandy slope up which, after six hours' pushing and hauling in terrific heat, we got the cars and that evening we ran into Mersa Matruh, stage-managing the most imperial smash during the last mile. The going was good, the patrol tired, and we were thinking more about baths and cooling drinks than driving, so that when the leading car suddenly stopped dead through failure of petrol, the second car crashed into its rear and the other two followed suit. Nobody was hurt, but three box bodies were turned into matchwood and three radiators were draped tastefully in clouds of steam over the engines and the front axles had to be seen to be believed.

Immediately after this exploit I was sent to the Palestine front and did not see the Libyan Desert again till late 1918, when I returned to it in a new guise—a freshly-appointed Administrative Officer to take charge of the Mariut sub-district at Amria. The World War was then in its last stages—the Turkish Army, broken and disorganised, had been driven out of Palestine and Syria, the Senussi myth had long since been exploded, and the Germans were falling back in France and Flanders. To clean up the mess

left by the war in the desert provinces of Egypt, a new department had been formed to maintain public security and administer the country generally and, having taken the trouble whilst in Egypt to learn a smattering of Arabic, I was one of the officers selected for an appointment and my post was the sub-district of Amria which lies about twenty miles west of Alexandria.

I am rather hazy as to what my instructions were—so far as I remember they were in the nature of ‘go and do your best,’ so I found myself at Amria in charge of an area about the size of Wales with an Egyptian officer, some Sudanese police, and three Coptic clerks, faced with the prospect of administering a wild Arab population of whose ways and outlook on life I was supremely ignorant. The country itself is not entirely desert, for along the coast of the Mediterranean is a belt of semi-desert land capable of producing first-class barley crops in the rainy season during the winter. South of this belt lay a wilderness where rain falls rarely and on which sparse scrub bushes grow, and south again of this lies the quite waterless waste of Libya, which extends southwards to Darfur in the Sudan and westwards to the Sahara itself.

The Arabs of Mariut are a virile and well-set-up race, differing in many respects from their cousins of Arabia and Sinai, so much so that it is doubtful if they are true Arabs—they are probably descendants of the Libyans who occupied the desert in the days of ancient Egypt. They are naturally a cheerful race with a marked sense of humour in which respect they are the direct antithesis of the Eastern Beduins who see nothing amusing whatsoever in this world and stake all their hopes on a really good time in the next. On the whole I found them very little trouble and, though my ignorance of the Arab and his ways was abysmal at the beginning, I soon got an idea of his general outlook on life. For instance, the second day following my arrival I was given an object lesson in the meaning of the expression ‘tribal-responsibility.’ I was watching a crowd of Arabs waiting round the mill to have their corn ground and noticed among them a particularly nice-looking old gentleman with a patriarchal beard. He seemed to be one of the most benign and peaceful individuals I had ever seen, and I was more than surprised when suddenly two lusty young men with *nabbûts* (staffs) approached and ‘taking the time from the right’ smote the poor old fellow two terrible cracks over the head, stretching him senseless. Immediately there was pandemonium indescribable—whistles blew, police appeared round every corner;

and the two young men shot into the lock-up in a cloud of dust, whilst my police officer, who was paralysed, brought up the rear doing a most effective hop, skip, and jump. It was the only time I saw him move from his chair during my eighteen months at Amria.

It transpired that the two assailants had just received the news that a cousin of theirs at Sollum, 200 miles away, had been assaulted by a cousin of the old gentleman's and therefore something had to be done about it. It was a pity, of course, that the only relative of the offending tribe on the spot happened to be a septuagenarian, but that was not *their* fault—honour had to be satisfied. I gave them three months' hard labour apiece, as assaults of this description within fifty yards of the police-station could not be tolerated, and moreover it staggered me that anyone should get hot and bothered over an attack on a relative like a cousin—I should be only too delighted if people would assault some of mine.

As our Administration had been formed very hastily we suffered from round pegs in square holes, both as regards our British staff and Egyptian. The gentle art of administering a semi-civilised race is not learnt in a day and several of the officers sent us from the Army—though excellent soldiers—were temperamentally unsuited for the work and had to be returned. With regard to the Egyptian staff, we had to accept what the Government could spare us and at that time there were not many suitable men available except discards—from weakness not from strength—and pensioners. I found installed at Amria as my second-in-command a very likeable old gentleman, Mohammed Effendi, whose service dated back to the early days of the British Occupation and whose sole idea of administration was to put the whole village in prison and keep them there. This system has much to recommend it, as it certainly does ensure public security, but it is apt to cause a feeling of dissatisfaction, not to say unrest, in time.

The second day of my reign I asked what the sentences were on the huge gang of prisoners I saw parading in the yard, and was surprised to hear that there were no sentences. I then enquired what the respective charges were and here Mohammed Effendi was somewhat vague and very verbose, ending up with the far-reaching remark that they were 'very bad people.' Being resolved to get to the bottom of the matter, I requested him to supply me with proof to this effect and this he did most convincingly by reiterating 'Everybody says so.' I then gave orders that the prisoners were all to be released forthwith, whereupon he protested and explained

that this action would be extremely detrimental to his dignity as *Mamour* (Resident Magistrate) of the district ; but in those days I did not realise what a fragile flower this much-vaunted and discussed dignity is and, being fresh from the Army where orders are obeyed with a jump, the whole of the prisoners were outside the *Markaz* (police barracks) and kissing my feet in gratitude within five minutes.

The following day, however, they were all back again, having been arrested during the night by the *Mamour's* orders, and there was a historic scene between Mohammed Effendi and myself, at the end of which I convinced him that I meant to be obeyed, and once again the prisoners went out through the prison gates, greeting their freedom with 'Long live the English,' a form of lip-service on which one can always count on occasions like this, and which one assesses at its true value, as they will shout 'Down with the English' just as fervently ten minutes later if the situation appears to justify it. On looking back on the episode after many years of service in the country, I realise that I acted with more haste than tact, for Mohammed Effendi had come from some isolated district in the Nile Valley where in the past bad characters were kept almost permanently under restraint, the theory being that prevention is better than cure, and by dissipating into the free and open air the whole of his carefully selected community I had severely damaged his *amour propre* and given the Arabs a very false idea of my leniency.

Headquarters at this time was over-staffed with office wallahs who, to keep themselves occupied, called for returns on every conceivable thing from officers, men, and camels to horse-shoes and handcuffs, and wanted them daily, weekly, and monthly. The British idea of a really efficient headquarters is a vast barrack filled with filing cupboards into which junior clerks can store away as they arrive the stacks of returns that are received by every mail, and if information is required on any of the points covered by a return it can always be wired for. There is no case on record of anyone at any headquarters having culled information from a return, which is perhaps just as well as some of the returns my particular office rendered in those days were unreliable, to say the least of it. For instance, it had been decreed that our Ford cars should run at an average of fifteen miles to the gallon, but, as everyone conversant with the old Ford car will remember, this early model refused to abide by any average and did either twenty-five or five miles to the gallon, according to its fancy. This refusal to abide by a definite order worried my chief clerk and in order to

conform to regulations he altered in the petrol return the distance from the office to the railway station. The mileage of fifteen to the gallon was religiously maintained, but, whereas on the 1st November the distance—the correct one—was half a mile, on the 2nd it had suddenly increased to ten miles, to shrink again on the 3rd to a modest five, and so on throughout the month. As the average of fifteen miles to the gallon was never departed from, these valuable returns passed muster at Headquarters and, all things considered, it was no doubt the wisest way of arranging an awkward matter. In any case they gave considerable satisfaction as it was proof positive that the Ford cars were running absolutely to schedule and therefore no one could be obtaining petrol illegally—and so everyone was pleased.

I had been at Amria about nine months when the revolution of 1919 blazed up the whole length of the Nile Valley, and in two days every railway and telegraph station in the country, with the exception of those in the big cities, had been destroyed. The rising, which came as a bolt from the blue, was the result of the refusal of our Government to allow delegates from Egypt to attend the Peace Conference, and, considering that representatives from obscure Arab states had been invited, the Egyptian had some cause for feeling incensed, though the destruction of their own railway stations was perhaps a queer way of showing it. The rising did not affect me in any way, as the Arabs took no interest in it whatsoever beyond a desire to see that their own particular railway, the Mariut Line, was not interfered with, as they had sufficient sense to see that it conveyed their produce—barley and wool—into Alexandria and brought out their tea, sugar, and flour. This did not prevent the authorities, both civil and military, from believing firmly that the Arabs had risen and, despite my reassuring telegrams, reports were rife that 40,000 armed Beduins were marching on Cairo. The old Arab bogey again.

Some eighty miles south of Amria in an oasis called Wadi Natrun were the works of the Egyptian Salt and Soda Company. This desert station was connected with the Nile Valley by a light railway leading to a branch line, but as the whole of the communications in Egypt had ceased to function the Wadi Natrun was cut off absolutely from the outer world. A possible motor track from Amria to Wadi Natrun had just been discovered, but as the run had only been made on three or four occasions little was known of its possibilities or disadvantages.

The military Powers that Be became extremely exercised about the safety of the thirty-odd European employees marooned in the desert and I was instructed to go to Alexandria to discuss with the G.O.C. the possibility of bringing them in by car. I told him I thought they were perfectly safe as I had been there three days previously and had found everything peaceful; but with the '40,000 armed Arabs' at the back of his mind he refused to be pacified, and the next day I set off across the desert with twenty-two cars of every conceivable make. I had stipulated that they should all be Fords as we knew their capabilities in sand, so it was not surprising to find that they were Rolls Royces, Talbots, Sunbeams, Studebakers, and every conceivable model *except* the Ford.

Despite the fact that none of the drivers had any experience of desert work, all went well till we suddenly flushed a big herd of gazelle—somebody let off a round, and in a moment the whole of my convoy in a fusillade of shots were roaring and bumping across the desert in chase of the flying antelope. It was impossible for me in my little Ford to round them up, as the high-powered cars were doing fifty miles an hour and, hypnotised with horror, I saw them shoot over ridges into the air, skid down loose slopes and bump over rocks till finally a big sand-dune put an end to the chase and one by one the delinquents returned. The cars were driven by a scratch lot of mechanics picked from various units serving in Alexandria, for the rising of 1919 had found the British Army in the midst of demobilisation, and discipline, which had survived four years of war, was conspicuous by its absence after the 11th November. It was, therefore, very little use for me to try and exert my authority by putting them under arrest.

On arrival at Wadi Natrun the European community, knowing that they were perfectly safe, strongly resented being moved, but my orders were to bring them back at all costs and into the cars they had to go, babies and all, and so far as I remember there were four. Another responsibility was a store of black powder at the factory which constituted a danger if by any chance the Arabs did attack the settlement during the absence of the staff. My orders were to blow it up, but as I had a hundred and one things to do in the way of posting the Sudanese guard I had brought down with me, etc., I told one of the engineers of the Company to carry it out. He asked for a fatigue party to help him and I detailed a couple of British infantrymen who represented part of my escort. In half an hour's time there was a loud explosion,

followed almost immediately by a terrific detonation and a vast column of black smoke shot up into the sky. Then I saw people running, and a moment later the two privates, with their clothing blown off and their faces black with powder, were brought in.

It appeared that the engineer, having shown them the powder, had left them to do the work—they had rolled the casks into a heap, had stove them in with axes, and had made a train—save the mark—about fifteen yards long, a foot wide, and four inches deep, with a big heap of powder weighing about 20 lb. at the end. Into this, which represented the touch off, they had inserted a match. The explosion of the 20 lb. had accounted for most of the damage, and the flame shooting along the short and far too heavy train had almost immediately fired the main portion and this had blown the already severely scorched men into the air. After hasty first aid by the doctor, they were placed on a mattress in a box Rolls and rushed off to Alexandria, where they ultimately made a complete recovery.

On my asking the Engineer how the accident had occurred he very naively explained that, having shown them the powder, he had left the work to them, as 'being soldiers they would naturally know all about powder and the firing of charges.' It is extremely doubtful if any infantryman, however long his service, has the most elementary idea of explosives and their detonation, and these particular boys were from the very latest 1918 drafts, had seen no active service, and probably hardly knew how to fire their rifles. This, to my mind, was typical of the complete and utter ignorance of the British Army and everything appertaining to it so frequently displayed by the average civilian, even in war-time.

The run back to Alexandria was made without any difficulty or incident of any kind and the G.O.C., thinking I had displayed no ordinary tactical skill in evading the hordes of raiding Arabs which everybody knew to be prowling in the desert, recommended me for a decoration which was eventually awarded to the R.A.S.C. officer who supplied the cars, but did not accompany the patrol. *Honor est præmium virtutis.*

A few months later a vacancy occurred in the Southern Desert and I was offered the post. It meant exchanging the temperate climate of the Libyan coast for the torrid heat of a low-lying, malaria-ridden oasis, but the transfer included promotion, and when one joins a desert administration one must be prepared to take the rough with the smooth—with a considerable preponderance of the former—and so to the Southern Desert I went.

### THE RUNNING BROOKS.

*W. G. Grace* : Bernard Darwin (Duckworth, 2s. n.).  
*The Cream of Cricket* : William Pollock (Methuen, 5s. n.).  
*My Cricket Reminiscences* : Maurice Tate (Paul, 5s. n.).  
*Swaaledale* : Ella Pontefract (Dent, 6s. n.).  
*Gardens of Delight* : Eleanour Sinclair Rohde (Medici Society, 15s. n.).  
*The Owner Gardener* : Sir Edward Anson, Bart. (Murray, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*The Women of My Time* : Janet Courtney (Dickson, 12s. 6d. n.).  
*Fine Art* : H. S. Goodhart-Rendel (Oxford University Press, 3s. 6d. n.).  
*Two Young Men See the World* : Stanley Unwin and Severn Storr (Allen & Unwin, 16s. n.).  
*Island Magic* : Elizabeth Goudge (Duckworth, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*Seed of Adam* : Violet Campbell (Murray, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*Breakfast in Bed* : Sylvia Thompson (Heinemann, 7s. 6d. n.).  
*Death in the Valley* : Bernard Newman (Archer, 7s. 6d. n.).

BOOKS on cricketers and cricket by such popular authorities as Mr. Bernard Darwin, Mr. William Pollock and the great Maurice Tate himself are always sure of a big public. At this time of the year they have a special charm and applicability.

Mr. Bernard Darwin's *W. G. Grace* is a pleasant little volume, racy and written with the ease and sureness of touch that characterise all the author's work. That it should have been published as one of Messrs. Duckworth's series of 'Great Lives' may seem strange at first sight. For even if 'big cricket,' as Mr. Pollock pertinently points out, 'is a very public business,' there are even to-day many otherwise perfectly sane people who regard the adoration offered at the shrine of its demi-gods with the same rather superior tolerance as the extravagant 'fan' admiration for film stars. In the case of 'W. G.' such objections are swept aside by the force of a great personality. It is with this aspect of his subject that Mr. Darwin is most, and very successfully, concerned. Content with Mr. C. E. Green's estimate—'The greatest cricketer that ever lived or ever will live'—he attempts no technical appraisement, sets forth no tables of statistical form. What he gives us is a lively, sympathetic portrait of the man himself, a portrait which prompts the not irreverent paraphrase :

What do they know of England  
Who knew not W. G. ?

With no less enthusiasm Mr. William Pollock skims *The Cream of Cricket* with his entertaining chronicle of many of the lesser but still great, pointing his recollections and analyses of their individual and technical characteristics with a knowledge and humour that should appeal as much to those 'good cricketers who keep the game alive' as to 'all the bad ones without whom it would die.'

Mr. Maurice Tate takes pen in hand with the laudable objects of amusing those who applaud him when he goes out to bat or when he gets a useful wicket and of handing down to his children the true story of his 'adventurous, exciting, and, on the whole, very pleasant life as a cricketer.' He makes of *My Cricketing Reminiscences* a cheery and varied record of his career, much of which is occupied with accounts of recent Test Matches with all their attendant, often inaccurate, publicity, ovations, and controversy.

As essentially and peculiarly English as are our cricket pitches and all that they imply is Miss Ella Pontefract's *Swaledale* in which the author describes the past and present life of the people of this remotest of the Yorkshire dales with a wealth of geographical and historical detail that reveal a wide and appreciative knowledge of her subject. The book, enriched by Miss Marie Hartley's beautiful little wood-cuts, may well prove a source of much profit and pleasure to those who, with it for guide, decide to explore this comparatively unknown and very interesting region of the countryside.

*Gardens of Delight* is as apt a description of Miss Eleanour Sinclair Rohde's latest book as of its subject. For here in pages whose magic is both poetic and practical, historical and up to date, she weaves spell after spell, now enchanting imagination with her word-pictures of plants and flowering shrubs imported from glamorous, far-off places, that can make of a mid-winter garden a thing of beauty as delicate and as sturdy as a Japanese print; now releasing the heady scents of summer borders, the glow and tang of autumn, the white and gold of spring. To each month of the year she allots a chapter dealing with its appropriate flowers and the best methods of ensuring their full perfection. In the November section vegetables, as things of decorative value as well as of utility, come into their own. Not the least of the charms of this most fascinating, and eminently practical, book are the literary and historical allusions in text and chapter-headings.

Sir Edward Anson strikes a responsive note in declaring that he wrote *The Owner Gardener* not for the benefit of the skilled profes-

sional but for those who 'having retired from business and moved into the country are faced with about an acre of land and have no idea of the best use to which it may be put.' From this practical standpoint he proceeds to give invaluable advice, beginning, not with the garden in its glory, but with the comparatively ugly and always arduous preliminaries going as far back as the choice and use of tools. How many amateur gardeners know that there is a right and a wrong, a comfortable as well as a painful, way of digging? Soil and its cultivation, kitchen and rock gardens, fruit-growing, hedges, walls and paving, trees and shrubs as well as simple flowers all come under exhaustive review in a volume that is a veritable encyclopædia of information compressed into handy and clearly classified form.

There are many interesting pen-pictures of some of the great feminine figures of the nineties, in Mrs. Janet Courtney's *The Women of My Time*, both of her own contemporaries and of those with whom she has been 'brought into some sort of personal contact at first- or second-hand.' As she herself puts it: 'There are many worlds, even in the world of women. Into some' she has 'hardly penetrated' and purposely says nothing of the artists, musicians, actresses, or pioneer medical women of her time. Among some of her vivid impressions are those of Dorothea Beale, Frances Dove, Elizabeth Wordsworth, and the three Lawrence sisters, names whose immortality in their individual spheres is synonymous with Cheltenham, Wycombe Abbey, Lady Margaret Hall, and Roedean. But Mrs. Courtney's contacts were not confined to the then brilliantly blossoming world of women's education. Writers, social workers, civil servants, women politicians, travellers—all these she has known and re-creates from careful study or trustworthy information. Perhaps it is because their particular work is common contemporary property rather than something greatly constructive but which is already embodied in a specialised tradition, that her chapter on 'The Post-War Spirit in Literature' as exemplified in Katherine Mansfield, Rose Macaulay, Virginia Woolf, and Edith Sitwell seems the most vital of a generally interesting book.

Professor Goodhart-Rendel's *Fine Art*—four lectures delivered in connection with the author's Slade Professorship at Oxford—is intended primarily for the artist and student. But what he has to say upon the materials, the making, the enjoyment, and criticism of Art is well worth the attention of the general reader as coming from one whose experience and judgment are no less cultured and

stimulating than his literary style. Upon the subject of criticism (which, he says, makes very amusing reading) he is particularly illuminating, some might think provocative, in his analysis of that form of interpretative criticism which has achieved a vast popularity chiefly because it gives to many people 'perfectly lovely feelings about nothing relevant.'

The letters written home by Mr. Stanley Unwin and Mr. Severn Storr in the course of a tour undertaken more than twenty years ago for the purpose of studying both bookselling and human conditions of life overseas have long ago served their original purpose. In offering them now to a wider public under the title *Two Young Men See the World* the writers hope that they may do something to encourage emigration 'when the good times return, as they surely will,' by presenting a first-hand account of many of those places, things, and conditions which, like Nature, remain perennially unchanged though incidentals alter or disappear. It is to be regretted that, despite their enthusiastic appreciation of many of the scenes and people they visited or met, they should use, in their Prefatory Note, the unpopular and inaccurate word 'Colonial' instead of the now universally adopted 'Dominion.'

Those who take up Miss Elizabeth Goudge's *Island Magic* under the impression that they are about to be transported to the exotic atmosphere of the South Seas will, if they are disappointed in this, find compensation of a very different kind in her charming tale of Guernsey in the nineteenth century. A little sentimental, a little mystical, warm with humour, and triumphantly real in the persons of the five children of the du Frocq family, it unfolds simply and naturally against a background of sea and sun and storm, its characters seen firmly in the round, carrying the reader easily by the excellence of its writing and the strength of the author's own belief in her story and her people over its few less convincing places. But above all Miss Goudge is to be congratulated on the children already mentioned.

Mrs. Violet Campbell works with very different materials on a crowded impressionistic canvas, in strong colours. A first novel, her *Seed of Adam* reveals an astonishingly wide knowledge of life together with a remarkable grasp of effective detail both in characterisation and atmosphere, and a by no means superficial insight into some of the problems of pathology. It is a restless book, urgent, often taut with strain as befits its study of a homicidal degenerate and the repercussions of ante-natal circumstance. If

the author is at times inclined to over-write and cannot altogether be absolved from the charge of melodrama, the same might equally truly be said of Charles Dickens of whom the architecture as well as the telling of her story are in many ways reminiscent. Though at present she lacks both the essence and the power of application of his significant humour, she is a writer of whom great things may confidently be expected.

The 'one-day' novel has been done often before. In *Breakfast in Bed* (a not particularly apposite title) Miss Sylvia Thompson repeats the experiment with considerable if not entire success. Spread over so many characters the effect, though her contrasts of environment and personality are sharp enough, is, dramatically, rather diffuse. The point of view shifts too often to allow that concentration of interest and tension which a well-constructed novel inevitably creates. As cameo-sketches, her studies of life as lived on the drawing-room floor and in the servants' hall in the upper middle-class security of Smith Square, as well as in the anxiety-ridden atmosphere of the home where unemployment forces the scarcely convalescent mother to seek a 'daily place,' are cleverly observed and drawn with quick, incisive strokes. It is in their individual contacts and relationships that they fall short of complete conviction.

It was a good idea of Mr. Bernard Newman's to set down in concrete, imaginative form the series of kaleidoscopic 'if's and chances' that, three hundred years ago, brought the plague from China to a Bavarian village and so brought into being the Oberammergau Passion Play. How much of *Death in the Valley* is fact and how much fiction the author does not disclose. That the play, which this year reaches its tercentenary performances, was the result of a vow made by the stricken peasants to enact the Passion in perpetuity as the price of deliverance from the plague is common knowledge. On this Mr. Newman has skilfully embroidered a multicoloured design of apparently trivial, but in the event far-reaching, incidents, all of them entirely plausible even if they may not be circumstantially true. It is the closing chapters that leave us doubting. Did the first Oberammergau Judas actually commit suicide and for the reason assigned by Mr. Newman?

*THE 'CORNHILL' COMPETITION.*

## DOUBLE ACROSTIC NO. 129.

THE Editor of the *CORNHILL* offers two prizes of books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue, to the two solvers of the Literary Acrostic, below, whose letters are opened first. Answers must be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, 50 Albemarle Street, W.1, and must contain the Coupon from page iii of the preliminary pages of this issue. They must reach the Editor by the 20th July.

' And ——, azure, black and —— with gold,  
Fairer than any waken'd eye behold.'

1. And ever changing, like a joyless eye  
That —— no object worth its constancy ?
2. But her heart was tired, tired  
And now they —— her be.
3. Till the silence, ——, under  
Made her heart beat more than thunder.
4. —— from thy nest, robin red-breast !  
Sing, birds, in every furrow.
5. Now ryse up, ——, decked as thou art  
In royll array  
And now ye daintie Damsels may depart  
Eche on her way.
6. Ay, this is the famed —— which Hercules  
And Goth and Moor bequeath'd us.
7. She —— in vain to reach the prize  
What female heart can gold despise ?  
What Cat's averse to fish ?

Answers to Acrostic 127 : 'I warm'd both hands before the fire of life' (Walter Savage Landor, 'Finis'). 1. *WitH* (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Kubla Khan'). 2. *ArcadiA* (Milton, 'Arcades'). 3. *RaiN* (Shelley, 'The Indian Serenade'). 4. *Mix'D* (Shelley, 'The Question'). 5. *DropS* (Shelley, 'To a Skylark').

The first correct answers opened were sent by Miss Todhunter, Riverdene, Bourne End, and Mrs. Carré, Ladies' National Club, 24 Poole Road, Bournemouth. These two solvers are invited to choose books from John Murray's catalogue to the value of £1.

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